

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

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VERY HARD CASH.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "IT IS NEVER TOO LATE TO MEND."

CHAPTER XIV.

IN the narrative of home events I skipped a little business, not quite colourless, but irrelevant to the love passages then on hand. It has however a connexion with the curious events now converging to a point: so, with the reader's permission, I will place it in logical sequence, disregarding the order of time. The day Dr. Sampson splashed among the ducks, and one of them hid till dinner, the rest were seated at luncheon, when two patients were announced as waiting—Mr. and Mrs. Maxley. Sampson refused to see them, on this ground: "I will not feed, and heal." But Mrs. Dodd interceded, and he yielded. "Well, then, show them in here; they are better cracters than pashints." On this, a stout fresh-coloured woman, the picture of health, was ushered in, and curtsied all round.

"Well, what is the matter now?" inquired Sampson, rather roughly.

"Be seated, Mrs. Maxley," said Mrs. Dodd, benignly.

"I thank ye kindly, ma'am," and she sat down. "Doctor, it is that pain."

"Well, don't say 'that pain.' Describe it. Now listen, all of ye; ye're goen to get a clinical lecture."

"If *you* please, ma'am," said the patient, "it takes me here under my left breast, and runs right to my elbow, it do: and bitter bad 'tis while it do last; chokes me, mostly; and I feel as I *must* die: and if I was to move hand or fut, I think I *should* die, that I do."

"Poor woman," said Mrs. Dodd.

"Oh, she isn't dead yet," cried Sampson, cheerfully. "She'll sell addled eggs over all our tombstones: that is to say, if she minds what I bid her. When was your last spasm?"

"No longer agone than yestereen, ma'am; and so I said to my master, 'the doctor he is due to-morrow Sally up at Albion tells me; and——'"

"Whisht! whisht! who cares what you said to Jack, and Jill said to you? What was the cause?"

"The cause! What, of my pain? He says, 'what was the cause?'"

"Ay, the cause. Just obsairve, jintlemen," said Sampson, addressing imaginary students, "how startled they all are, if a docker deviates from professional habits into sceince, and takes the right end of the stick for once b' asking for the cause."

"The cause was the will of God, I do suppose," said Mrs. Maxley.

"Stuff!" shouted Sampson, angrily. "Then why come to mortal me to cure you?"

Alfred put in his oar. "He does not mean the 'final cause,' he means the 'proximate cause.'"

"My poor dear creature, I baint no Latiner," objected the patient.

Sampson fixed his eyes sternly on the slippery dame. "What I want to know is, had you been running up-stairs? or eating fast? or drinking fast? or grizzling over twopence? or quarrelling with your husband? Come now, which was it?"

"Me quarrel with my man! We haven't never been disagreeable, not once, since we went to church a pair and came back a couple. I don't say but what we mayn't have had a word or two at odd times, as married folk will."

"And the last time you had a word or two—y' infairnal quibbler—was it just before your last spasm, eh?"

"Well, it might; I am not gainsaying that: but you said quarrel, says you; 'quarrel' it were your word; and I defy all Barkton, gentle and simple, to say as how me and my master——"

"Whisht! whisht! Now, jintlemen, ye see what the great coming sceince—the sceince of Healing—heart, to contind with. The dox are all fools; but one: and the pashints are lyres, ivery man Jack. N' listen me; y' have got a disease that you can't eradicate; but you may muzzle it for years, and die of something quite different when your time's up."

"Like enough, sir. If *you* please, ma'am, Dr. Stephenson do blame my indigestion for it."

"Dr. Stephenson's an ass."

"Dear heart, how cantankerous you be. To be sure Dr. Osmond he says no: it's muscular, says he."

"Dr. Osmond's an ijit! List me! You mustn't grizzle about money; you mustn't gobble, nor drink your beer too fast."

"You are wrong, doctor; I never drink no beer: it costs."

"Your catlap, then. And, above all, no griz-

zling! Go to church whenever you can without losing a farthing. It's medicinal; soothes the brain, and takes it off worldly cares. And have no words with your husband: or he'll outlive you; it's his only chance of getting the last word. Care killed a cat, a nanimal with eight lives more than a chatterbox. If you worry or excite your brain, little Maxley, you will cook your own goose—by a quick fire."

"Dear heart, these be unked sayings. Won't ye give me nothing to make me better, sir?"

"No; I never tinker; I go to the root: you may buy a vile of chlorofom, and take a puff if ye feel premonory symps: but a quite brain is your only real chance. Now slope! and send the male screw."

"Anan?"

"Your husband."

"That I will, sir. Your sarvant, doctor; your sarvant, ma'am; sarvant all the company."

Mrs. Dodd hoped the poor woman had nothing very serious the matter.

"Oh, it is a mortal disease," replied Sampson, as cool as a cucumber. "She has got angina pictoris, or brist-pang, a disorder that admirably eximplifies the pretinsions of midicine t' a sceince." And with this he dashed into a long monologue.

Maxley's tall gaunt form came slouching in, and traversed the floor, pounding it with heavy nailed boots. He seated himself gravely at Mrs. Dodd's invitation, took a handkerchief out of his hat, wiped his face, and surveyed the company, grand and calm. In James Maxley all was ponderous; his head was huge; his mouth, when it fairly opened, revealed a chasm, and thence issued a voice naturally stentorian by its volume and native vigour. But when the owner of this incarnate bassoon had a mind to say something sagacious, he sank at once from his habitual roar to a sound scarce above a whisper; a contrast mighty comical to hear, though on paper nil.

"Well, what is it, Maxley? Rheumatism again?"

"No, that it ain't," bellowed Maxley, defiantly.

"What then? Come, look sharp."

"Well, then, doctor, I'll tell you. I'm sore troubled—with—a—mouse."

This malady, announced in the tone of a proclamation, and coming after so much solemn preparation, amused the party considerably, although parturient mountains had ere then produced muscicular abortions.

"A mouse!" inquired Sampson, disdainfully. "Where? up your sleeve? Don't come to me: go t' a sawbones and have your arm cut off. I've seen 'em mutilate a pashint for as little."

Maxley said it was not up his sleeve, worse luck.

On this, Alfred hazarded a conjecture. Might it not have gone down his throat? "Took his potato-trap for the pantry-door. Ha! ha!"

"Ay, I hear ye, young man, a laughing at your own sport," said Maxley, winking his eye; "but 'tain't the biggest mouth as catches the most:

you sits yander fit to bust: but (with a roar like a lion) ye never offers me none on't, neither sup nor bit."

At this sudden turn of Mr. Maxley's wit, light and playful as a tap of the old English quarter-staff, they were a little staggered, all but Edward, who laughed and supplied him zealously with sandwiches.

"You're a gentleman, you are," said Maxley, looking full at Sampson and Alfred to point the contradistinction.

Having thus disposed of his satirists, he contemplated the sandwiches with an inquiring and philosophic eye. "Well," said he, after long and thoughtful inspection, "you gentlefolks won't die of hard work; your sarvants must cut the very meat to fit your mouths." And not to fall behind the gentry in a great and useful department of intelligence, he made precisely one mouthful of each sandwich.

Mrs. Dodd was secretly amazed, and taking care not to be noticed by Maxley, said confidentially, "Monsieur avait bien raison; le souris a passé par là."

The plate cleared, and washed down with a tumbler of port, Maxley resumed, and informed the doctor that the mouse was at this moment in his garden eating his bulbs. "And I be come here to put an end to her, if I've any luck at all."

Sampson told him he needn't trouble. "Nature has put an end to her as long as her body."

Mr. Maxley was puzzled for a moment, then opened his mouth from ear to ear, in a guffaw that made the glasses ring. His humour was perverse: he was wit-proof and fun-proof; but at a feeble jest would sometimes roar like a lion inflated with laughing gas. Laughed he ever so loud and long, he always ended abruptly and without gradation; his laugh was a clean spadeful dug out of Merriment. He resumed his gravity and his theme all in an instant, "White arsenic she w on't look at, for I've tried her; but they tell me there's another sweetmeat come up: which they call it strick-nine."

"Hets! let the poor beastly alone. Life's as sweet tit as tus."

"If *you* was a *gardener*, you'd feel for the bulbs, not for the varmin," remonstrated Maxley, rather arrogantly.

"But bein a man of sceince, I feel for th' higher organisation. Mice are a part of Nature; as much as market gardeners."

"So be stoats; and adders; and doctors."

Sampson appealed; "Jintlemen, here's a pretty pashint: reflects on our larned profission, and it never cost him a guinea; for the dog never pays."

"Don't let my chaff choke ye, doctor! That warn't meant for *you* altogether. So if ye *have* got a little bit of that ere about you—"

"I'm not a ratcatcher, my man: I don't go with dith in my pocket, like the surgeons that carry a lancet. And if I had Murder in both pockets, you shouldn't get any. Here's a greedy dog! got a thousand pounds in the bank; and

grudges his Healer a guinea, and his mouse a stand up bite."

"Now, who have been a telling you lies?" inquired Maxley, severely. "My missus, for a farthing. I'm not a thousand pound man; I'm a nine hundred pound man: and it's all safe at Hardie's:" here he went from his roar to his whisper, "I don't hold with Lunnan banks; they be like my missus's eggs: all one outside, and the rotten ones only known by breaking. Well (loud) I *be* pretty close, I don't deny it; but (confidentially) my missus beats me. I look twice at a penny; but she looks twice at both sides of a halfpenny before she will let him go: and it's her being so close have raised all this here bobbery; and so I told her; says I, 'Missus.—If you would but leave an end of a dip, or a paring of cheese, about your cupboard, she would bide at home; but you hungers her so, you drives her afield right on atop o' my roots.' 'Oh,' says my missus, 'if I was to be as wasteful as *you* be, where should *we* be, come Christmas day? Every tub on its own bottom,' says she; 'man and wife did ought to keep themselves to themselves, she to the house, and I to the garden;' 'so be it,' says I, and by the same token, don't let me catch them "Ns" in my garden again, or I'll spoil their clucking and scratching,' says I, 'for I'll twist their dalled necks: ye've got a yard,' says I, 'and a roost, and likewise a turnpike, you and your poultry: so bide at home the lot; and don't come a scratching o' me!' and with that we had a ripput; and she took one of her pangs; and then I behaved to knock under; and that is allus the way if ye quarrel with women folk; they are sworn to get the better of ye by hook or by crook, now dooce give me a bit of that ere, to quiet this here, as eats me up by the roots and sets my missus and me by the cars."

"*Justum ac tenacem propositi virum*," whispered Alfred to Edward.

Sampson told him angrily to go to a certain great personage.

"Not afore my betters," whispered Mr. Maxley, smit with a sudden respect for etiquette. "Won't ye now?"

"I'll see ye hanged first, ye miserly old assassin."

"Then I have nothing to thank *you* for," roared Maxley, and made his adieux, ignoring with marked contempt the false physician who declined to doctor the foe of his domestic peace and crocuses.

"Quite a passage of arms," said Edward.

"Yes," said Mrs. Dodd, "and of bludgeons and things, rather than the polished rapier. What expressions to fall from two highly educated gentlemen! Slope—Potato-trap—Sawbones—Catlap—je n'en finirais pas."

She then let them know that she meditated a "dictionary of jargon;" in hopes that its bulk might strike terror into honest citizens, and excite an anti-jargon league to save the English language, now on the verge of dissolution.

Sampson was pleased with this threat. "Now, that is odd," said he. "Why I am compilin a vocabulary myself. I call 't th' ass-ass-ins' dickshinary; showing how, by the use of mealy mouthed an d'exotic phrases, knaves can lead fools by th' ear t' a vilent dith. F'r instance; if one was to say to John Bull, 'Now I'll cut a great gash in your arm and let your blood run till ye drop down senseless,' he'd take fright, and say, 'Call another time!' So the professional ass-ass-in words it thus; 'I'll bleed you from a large orifice till th' occurrence of syncope.' All right, sis John: he's bled from a lar j'orifice and dies three days after of th' assassin's knife hid in a sheath o' goose grease. But I'll blow the gaff with my dickshinary."

"Meantime *there* is another contribution to mine," said Mrs. Dodd.

And they agreed in the gaiety of their hearts to compare their rival Lexicons.

CHAPTER XV.

THEY got to the wounded captain, and raised him: he revived a little; and, the moment he caught sight of Mr. Sharpe, he clutched him, and cried, "Stunsels!"

"Oh, captain," said Sharpe, "let the ship go, it is you we are anxious for now."

At this Dodd lifted up his hands and beat the air impatiently, and cried again in the thin, querulous, voice of a wounded man, but eagerly, "STUNSELS! STUNSELS!"

On this, Sharpe gave the command. "Set to-gallant stunsels! All hands set stunsels 'low and aloft!"

While the unwounded hands swarmed into the rigging, the surgeon came aft in all haste; but Dodd declined him till all his men should have been looked to: meantime he had himself carried to the poop, and laid on a mattress, his bleeding head bound tight with a wet cambric handkerchief, and his pale face turned towards the hostile schooner astern. She had hove to, and was picking up the survivors of her blotted out consort. The group on the Agra's quarter deck watched her to see what she would do next; flushed with immediate success the younger officers crowed their fears she would not be game to attack them again; Dodd's fears ran the other way: he said, in the weak voice to which he was now reduced, "they are taking a wet blanket aboard; that crew of blackguards we swamped won't want any more of us: it all depends on the Pirate Captain; if he is not drowned, then blow wind, rise sea: or there's trouble ahead for us."

As soon as the schooner had picked up the last swimmer, she hoisted foresail, mainsail, and jib, with admirable rapidity, and bore down in chase.

The Agra had, meantime, got a start of more than a mile, and was now running before a stiff breeze with studding sails alow and aloft.

In an hour the vessels ran nearly twelve miles, and the pirate had gained half a mile.

At the end of the next hour they were out of sight of land; wind and sea rising; and the pirate only a quarter of a mile astern.

The schooner was now rising and falling on the waves; the ship only nodding, and firm as a rock.

"Blow wind, rise sea!" faltered Dodd.

Another half-hour passed without perceptibly altering the position of the vessels. Then, suddenly, the wounded captain laid aside his glass, after a long examination, and rose unaided to his feet in great excitement, and found his manly voice for a moment: he shook his fist at the now pitching schooner, and roared, "Good-by! ye Portuguese lubber; outfought—outmanœuvred—AND OUTSAILED!"

It was a burst of exultation rare for him; he paid for it by sinking faint and helpless into his friend's arms: and the surgeon, returning soon after, insisted on his being taken to his cabin, and kept quite quiet.

As they were carrying him below, the Pirate Captain made the same discovery; that the ship was gaining on him: he bore up directly, and abandoned the chase.

When the now receding pirate was nearly hull down, the sun began to set; Mr. Tickell looked at him, and said, "Hallo! old fellow, what are you about? Why, it isn't two o'clock!"

The remark was quite honest: he really feared, for a moment, that orb was mistaken and would get himself—and others—into trouble. However, the middy proved to be wrong, and the sun right to a minute; Time flies fast, fighting.

Mrs. Beresford came on deck with brat and poodle: Fred, a destructive child, clapped his hands with glee at the holes in the canvas: Snap toddled about smelling the blood of the slain, and wagging his tail by halves; perplexed. "Well, gentlemen," said Mrs. Beresford, "I hope you have made noise enough over one's head: and what a time you did take to beat that little bit of a thing: Freddy, be quiet; you worry me; where is your bearer? will anybody oblige me by finding Ramgolam?"

"I will," said Mr. Tickell, hastily, and ran off for the purpose; but he returned after some time with a long face. No Ramgolam to be found.

Fullalove referred her—with humour-twinkling eye—to Vespasian. "I have a friend here who says he can tell you something about him."

"Can you, my good man?" inquired the lady, turning haughtily towards the negro.

"Iss, Missy," said Vespasian, showing his white teeth in a broad grin, "dis child knows where to find dat ar nigger, widout him been and absquatulated since."

"Then go and fetch him directly."

Vespasian went off with an obedient start.

This annoyed Fullalove; interfered with his system: "Madam," said he, gravely, "would you oblige me by bestowing on my friend a portion of that courtesy with which you favour me, and which becomes you so gracefully?"

"Certainly not," replied Mrs. Beresford. "Mr. Fullalove, I am out of patience with you: the idea of a sensible intelligent gentleman, like you, calling that creature your friend! and you an American; where they do nothing but whip them from morning till night. Who ever heard of making friends with a black?—Now what is the meaning of this? I detest practical jokes." For the stalwart negro had returned, bringing a tall bread bag in his arms: he now set it up before her, remarking, "Dis yar bag white outside, but him nation black inside." To confirm his words, he drew off the bag, and revealed Ramgolam, his black skin powdered with meal. The good-natured negro then blew the flour off his face, and dusted him a bit: the spectators laughed heartily, but Ramgolam never moved a muscle: not a morsel discomposed at what would have made an European miserably ashamed, even in a pantomime, the Caucasian darkie retained all his dignity, while the African one dusted him; but, being dusted, he put on his obsequiousness, stepped forward, joined his palms together to Mrs. Beresford—like mediæval knights and modern children at their devotions—and addressed her thus:

"Daughter of light, he who basks in your beams, said to himself, 'The pirates are upon us, those children of blood, whom Sheitan your master, blast for ever! They will ravish the Queen of Sunshine and the ayahs, and throw the sahibs and sailors into the sea; but, bread being the staff of existence, these foxes of the water will not harm it, but keep it for their lawless appetites; therefore Ramgolam, Son of Chitroo, Son of Soonarayan, will put the finger of silence on the lip of discretion, and be bread in the day of adversity: the sons of Sheitan will peradventure return to dry land, and close the eye of watchfulness; then will I emerge like the sun from a cloud; and depart in peace.'"

"Oh, very well," said Mrs. Beresford; "then you are an abominable egotist, that is all: and a coward: and thank Heaven Freddy and I were defended by English: and Americans, and—hem!—their friends; and not by Hindoos." She added charmingly, "this shows me my first words on coming here ought to have been to offer my warmest thanks to the brave men who *have* defended me and my child." and swept them so queenly a courtesy, that the men's hats and caps flew off in an instant. "Mr. Black," said she, turning with a voice of honey to Vespasian, but aiming obliquely at Fullalove's heart, "*would* you oblige me by kicking that dog a *little*; he is always smelling what does not belong to him; why it is blood; oh!" and she turned pale in a moment.

Sharp thought some excuse necessary. "You see, ma'am, we haven't had time to clean the decks since."

"It is the blood of men; of the poor fellows who have defended us so nobly!" faltered the lady, trembling visibly.

"Well, ma'am," said Sharpe, still half apologetic.

tically, "you know a ship can't fight all day long without an accident or two." He added with nautical simplicity, and love of cleanliness, "however the deck will be cleaned, and holy-stoned, to-morrow, long before you turn out."

Mrs. Beresford was too much overcome to explain how much deeper her emotion was than a dislike to stained floors. She turned faint, and on getting the better of that, went down to her cabin crying. Thence issued a royal order that the wounded were to have wine and every luxury they could fancy, without limit or stint; at her expense.

The next day a deep gloom reigned in the ship; the crew were ranged in their Sunday clothes, and bare-headed: a grating was rigged; Sharpe read the burial service; and the dead, each man sewed up in his hammock with a 32 lb. shot, glided off the grating into the sea with a sullen plunge; while their shipmates cried so, that the tears dripped on the deck.

With these regrets for the slain, too violent to last, were mingled a gloomy fear that Death had a heavier blow in store. The surgeon's report of Captain Dodd was most alarming; he had become delirious about midnight; and so continued.

Sharpe commanded the ship; and the rough sailors stepped like cats over that part of the deck, beneath which their unconscious captain lay. If two men met on the quarter deck, a look of anxious, but not hopeful, inquiry, was sure to pass between them.

Among the constant inquirers was Ramgolam. The grave Hindoo often waylaid the surgeon at the captain's door, to get the first intelligence. This marked sympathy with a hero in extremity was hardly expected from a sage, who at the first note of war's trumpet had vanished in a meal-bag. However, it went down to his credit. One person, however, took a dark view of this innocent circumstance. But then that hostile critic was Vespasian, a rival in matters of tint. He exploded in one of those droll rages darkies seem liable to: "Massa cunning," said he, "what for dat yar nigger always prowling about the cap'n's door? What for he ask so many stupid questions? Dat ole fox arter no good; him heart so black as um skin: dam old nigger!"

Fullalove suggested slyly that a person with a dark skin might have a grateful heart: and the colonel, who dealt little in innuendo, said, "Come, don't you be so hard on jet; you ebony!"

"Bery well, gemmen," replied Vespasian, ceremoniously, and with seeming acquiescence. Then, with sudden ire, "Because Goramighty make you white, you tink you bery wise without any more trouble. Dat ar nigger am an abom-mable egotisk."

"Pray what does that mean?" inquired Kenealy, innocently.

"What him mean? what him mean? Yah! yah!"

"Yes. What does it mean?"

"What him mean? Yah! What, diinn't you hear Missy Besford misal him an abom-mable egotisk?"

"Yes," said Fullalove, winking to Kenealy; "but we don't know what it means. Do you, sir?"

"Iss, sar. Dat ar expression he signify a darned old cuss dat says to dis child, 'My lord Vespasian, take benevolence on your insidious slave, and invest me in a bread-bag,' instead of fighting for de ladies like a freenindependum citizen. Now you two go fast asleep; dis child he shut one eye and open de oder bery wide open on dat ar nigger." And with this mysterious threat he stalked away.

His contempt for a black skin, his ebullitions of unexpected ire, his turgid pomposity, and love of long terms, may make the reader smile; but they could hardly amuse his friends just then: everything that touched upon Dodd was too serious now. The surgeon sat up with him nearly all night: in the daytime these two friends sat for hours in his cabin, watching sadly, and silently moistening his burning brow and his parched lips.

At length, one afternoon, there came a crisis, which took an unfavourable turn. Then the surgeon, speaking confidentially to these two staunch friends, inquired if they had asked themselves what should be done with the body? "Why I ask," said he, "we are in a very hot latitude; and, if you wish to convey it to Barkington, the measures ought to be taken in time: in fact, within an hour or two after death."

The poor friends were shocked and sickened by this horrible piece of foresight. But Colonel Kenealy said with tears in his eyes that his old friend should never be buried like a kitten.

"Then you had better ask Sharpe to give me an order for a barrel of spirits," said the surgeon.

"Yes, yes, for two if you like. O don't die, Dodd, my poor old fellow. How shall I ever face his wife—I remember her, the loveliest girl you ever saw—with such a tale as this? She will think it a cruel thing I should come out of it without a scratch, and a ten times better man to be dead: and so it is; it is cruel, it is unjust, it is monstrous; him to be lying there, and we muffs to be sitting croaking over him and watching for his last breath like three cursed old ravens." And the stout colonel groaned aloud.

When the surgeon left them, they fell naturally upon another topic: the pledge they had given Dodd about the 14,000*l*. They ascertained it was upon him: next his skin: but it seemed as unnecessary as it was repugnant, to remove it from his living person. They agreed, however, that instantly on his decease they would take possession of it, note the particulars, seal it up, and carry it to Mrs. Dodd, with such comfort as they could hope to give her by relat-

ing the gallant act in which his precious life was lost.

At nine p.m. the surgeon took his place by Dodd's bedside; and the pair, whom one thing after another had drawn so close together, retired to Kenealy's cabin.

Many a merry chat they had had there: and many a gasconade; being rival hunters: but now they were together for physical companionship in sorrow; rather than for conversation. They smoked their cigars in moody silence; and at midnight shook hands with a sigh, and parted. That sigh meant to say that in the morning all would be over.

They turned in: but, ere either of them was asleep, suddenly the captain's cabin seemed to fill with roars and shrieks of wild beasts, that made the whole ship ring in the silent night; the savage cries were answered on deck by shouts of dismay and many pattering feet making for the companion ladder: but the nearest persons to the cabin, and the first to reach it, were Kenealy and Fullalove, who burst in, the former with a drawn sword, the latter with a revolver, both in their night-gowns; and there saw a sight that took their breath away.

The surgeon was not there: and two black men, one with a knife, and one with his bare claws, were fighting, and struggling, and trampling all over the cabin at once, and the dying man sitting up in his cot, pale, and glaring at them.

UNDEVELOPED IMPRESSIONS.

BEYOND the region of positive ideas and emotions, there lies, in the minds of all persons who have any sensitiveness of perception, a strange ghostly tract of unexplored country, full of shadowy suggestions of thoughts and feelings, and lit by the faint, spectral light of what may perchance be the Aurora of some higher knowledge now on its way to us. Debased by charlatanism and absurdity as the so-called "spiritualism" of the present day undoubtedly is, some service may be done by hinting to the thoughtless that there may be possible associations which give an apparently supernatural colour to the ordinary transactions of life.

Has the reader never experienced the strange tricks which memory occasionally plays with him? He is engaged on something which utterly engrosses his mental powers. Perhaps it is a very serious subject, such as necessarily precludes any levity of ideas; perhaps he is working, and thinking of nothing but his work; perhaps he is writing, with a concentration of intellect. Suddenly there bursts into the middle of his thoughts some recollection of an incident that happened five-and-twenty or thirty years ago; a reminiscence of his childhood; a trivial circumstance, which was forgotten the day after it happened, and which has never once crossed his mind since. It may be said that a connect-

ing link exists between the subject occupying the mind at the time, and the recollection which suddenly arises out of the long sealed-up vaults and catacombs of the past. But, if so, the link is of such exquisite fineness as to defy detection. No analogy of the most distant or fantastic kind can be traced between the two sets of ideas. The unbidden recollection starts up with a sort of goblin wilfulness and inappropriateness. It is wonderful that you should think of the circumstance at all; still more wonderful that you should think of it at that particular moment. Yet there it is; unaccountably obtruding itself into the midst of thoughts to which it bears no relationship, or none which can be traced by mortal wit.

Analogous to this is that freak of the brain which probably all of us have experienced, when, after vainly endeavouring for a long while to recollect some tune, we wake in the middle of the night with the whole of it, from the first note to the last, "running in our heads." Persons have been known to remember facts in their sleep which they had tried hard to recover when awake, but had never succeeded in doing. Coleridge composed a poem in his sleep, and Tartini a piece of music, which he conceived was far superior to anything he had written or heard at other times; so that it would appear that the state of somnolency has sometimes a stimulating, as well as a sedative, effect on the mental powers. But this is not so astonishing and beyond explanation as the sudden and gratuitous recollection of events which have long passed out of view, and which are in themselves too unimportant to have made any deep impression at the time of their occurrence. Is it that every experience in life, even the most frivolous, leaves an indelible print on the mental organism, and that, although this print may seemingly fade out, it is still there, like writing in invisible ink, and only awaits some exciting cause to bring it out clearly and legibly? But, if so, what is the exciting cause, none being cognisable? What mysterious hand touches the spring that opens those forgotten doors?

That every impression remains, seems certain, if we can depend on what is recorded of the experiences of persons on the threshold of death. Those who have been recovered from drowning or hanging say that, previous to the advent of unconsciousness, they have seen a species of panorama of their whole previous existence, of which not the smallest incident, thought, or feeling has been lost; and it is thence inferred that all human beings at the moment of dissolution experience this awful resurrection of the dead past. Yet that the phenomenon does not invariably attend the act of drowning, is manifest from the very interesting and detailed account left us by Dr. Adam Clarke, in his Autobiography, of his narrow escape from death in the river Ban, when a boy. He states that his feeling was simply one of intense happiness and placidity, combined with "a general impression of a green colour, such as of fields or gardens," and that his first and only pain was when he was taken out of the

water, and his lungs were once more inflated with atmospheric air. But he may not have reached the point at which the memory is preternaturally excited. It is not difficult to believe that the last action of the brain may be a supreme resumption of its own impressions. The concentration of a whole life in a single moment or two is indeed marvellous; but the *sense* of time seems to have very little to do with the actual *duration* of time. The idea of eternity, or of the lapse of infinite ages, is often experienced in the course of a dream which can only have lasted a very short period. This is especially the case with opium-eaters; but it will occur even to those who never indulge in that perilous narcotic. Moslem writers affirm that the miraculous journey of Mahomet from Mecca to Jerusalem, and thence through the whole of the Seven Heavens, was performed in so infinitesimal a fraction of time, that the Prophet, on awaking from his trance, was able to arrest the fall of a water-jar which the angel Gabriel had knocked over with his wing in the act of their departure. Another Oriental legend tells of an infidel Caliph, who, doubting the truth of this relation, was directed by a certain conjuror to plunge his head in a bucket of water, and withdraw it with the greatest speed possible. He did so, and in that momentary interval had a dream or vision of a long life abounding in vicissitudes and extraordinary incidents. These, of course, are fables; but they are based upon psychological mysteries such as are known to exist.

Hardly less wonderful is the connexion between particular odours and specific recollections or trains of ideas. Thousands have felt this, and it is one of the most beautiful instances of what may be called the magic of memory. Hazlitt used to refer to a remark made by Mr. Fearn, a metaphysical writer of his time, to the effect that certain associations of ideas always brought back to him, with the vividness of an actual impression on the sensorium, the smell of a baker's shop in Bassora. This is just the reverse of the ordinary experience; but we can readily understand it. The late Mr. P. G. Patmore, who records this circumstance in his work entitled *My Friends and Acquaintance*, avers that, in his own case, tastes were even more powerful than smells in producing similar effects. "I could never taste green mustard and cress," he writes, "without its calling up to my mind, as if by magic, the whole scene of my first school-days, when I used to grow it in my little bit of garden in the inner playground; that every individual object there present used to start up before me with all the distinctness of actual vision, and to an extent of detail which no effort of memory could accomplish without this assistance; and that nothing but the visible objects of the scene presented themselves on these occasions." As the flavour died away, the vision would fade from the mental sight, but would be instantly renewed by tasting the herb once more. It is easy to refer the explanation of such facts to mere association of ideas.

An unhealthy or depressed bodily condition has doubtless much to do with mystical impressions. To the man who goes to bed early and rises early, the time of sunrise is invigorating and inspiring; but to him who has been up all night, especially when pursuing intellectual work, the return of light is often peculiarly mournful, oppressive, and spectral. It is the true ghost season—far more than midnight; and especially so in the hushed and empty thoroughfares of a great city, with its vast circles of suspended life. The empty street, stretching before you in dim perspective, is a phantom land at such moments; the familiar holds strange intercourse with the unfamiliar, and is weirdly suggestive. We have known an instance of a man who, returning home early one summer morning from a night of mental labour, was oppressed by an intense and preternatural sense of a hundred years in advance; that is to say, by some singular, unbidden trick of the mind, he seemed to contemplate the existing time—himself and all—as something that had passed for a century. Fatigue was the cause of this; but the fancy opens a strange glimpse into the vague and shadowy regions of morbid experience.

The most astounding and solemn feeling of this nature is the impression, amounting at the moment to conviction, that we have lived before in some remote age, and that all the circumstances and accessories now surrounding us, even to the most minute and insignificant, surrounded us at that former period. Lord Lindsay, in his *Letters from the East*, describes this feeling with a literal exactness which will be at once recognised by all who have ever undergone it. He says: "We saw the river Kadisha, like a silver thread, descending from Lebanon. The whole scene bore that strange and shadowy resemblance to the wondrous landscape delineated in Kubla Khan that one so often feels in actual life, when the whole scene around you appears to be reacting after a long interval; your friend seated in the same juxtaposition, the subjects of conversation the same, and shifting with the same 'dream-like ease' that you remember at some remote and indefinite period of pre-existence. You always know what will come next, and sit spell-bound, as it were, in a sort of calm expectancy." It would have been more correct to say that we *seem* to know what will come next, for it is certainly doubtful whether we *really* know it. But the effect on the mind is that of an absolute foreknowledge, so that, when anything is said, it appears to be precisely what was anticipated. The feeling is, in truth, as Lord Lindsay admirably expresses it, one of "calm expectancy," and, apart from the sense of strangeness, is rather soothing and agreeable than unpleasant. This, however, is supposing that it be not prolonged. When it continues to haunt the mind, it becomes horribly oppressive, and is a clear sign that cerebral disorder has set in. Sir Walter Scott was thus troubled towards the latter end of his life, when he was overworked and harassed by difficulties. He states in his

diary for February, 1828, that he was afflicted one day at dinner-time by a sense of pre-existence so strong as to resemble a mirage or a calenture; and he adds: "There was a vile sense of want of reality in all I did and said." The mind was evidently overtasked, and, had it been less strong, might have broken down altogether.

Tennyson, in one of his earlier volumes, has a sonnet, in which he describes this singular mental condition with the finely organised apprehension of a poet:

As when with downcast eyes we muse and brood,
And ebb into a former life, or seem
To lapse far back in a confused dream
To states of mystical similitude;
If one but speaks, or hems, or stirs his chair,
Ever the wonder waxeth more and more,
So that we say, "All this hath been before,
All this *hath* been, I know not when or where."
So, friend, when first I look'd upon your face,
Our thought gave answer, each to each, so true,
Opposed mirrors, each reflecting each,—
Although I knew not in what time or place,
Methought that I had often met with you,
And each had liv'd in the other's mind and speech.

Wordsworth refers to the belief in pre-existence in his magnificent Ode on Immortality; and the opinion is one which runs through the whole philosophy and religion of the world, especially of the Eastern races. The Brahmins and Buddhists teach that the soul has already passed through many previous conditions, and will pass through many more ere it attains the blissful state of absolute repose and personal non-existence resulting from its re-absorption into the Deity, from whom it emanated. The more philosophical among the ancient Greeks held the same view. Pythagoras professed to have a distinct recollection of his former lives; and Plato said that the knowledge which we seem to acquire for the first time is only the recollection of what the soul knew before its submersion in matter, and its assumption of the human form. Some of the Hellenic philosophers contended that the endless repetition of the same mode of existence, though at vast intervals of time, is an absolute necessity, because, there being only a certain number of things in the universe, there can only be a certain number of combinations, and, when those are exhausted, the same course must begin over again. After this theory, the apparent recollection of what is passing around us may be no delusion, but a genuine, though abnormal, exercise of the memory.

A wonderful instance of apparent recollection of a previous life is related of himself by William Hone, the author of the *Every-day Book*. He says that one day he had to make a call in a part of London which was quite unknown to him. He was shown into a room to wait, and, on looking round, remarked, to his astonishment, that every object appeared familiar. It then occurred to him that there was a very peculiar knot in the shutter; and he determined to test the reality of the impression by examining into the fact. He therefore turned back the shutter, and found the knot.

Previously to this, he had been a materialist; but the incident impressed him with the belief that there must be something beyond matter, and he finally became a member of a religious sect.

The reduplication of this world is another strange speculation that has from time to time appeared on the intellectual horizon. Pythagoras and various ancient writers affirmed that there was a globe resembling our earth, and called Antichthon, which was constantly moving round the sun, though always invisible to us, because invariably on the opposite side of the solar orb to ourselves. A few years ago, we came across a singular book professing to give an account of the Neo-Christian religion, which is shortly to supplant the older form; and we there discovered this old tradition of Antichthon reproduced on a larger and still more amazing scale. The anonymous writer says that the whole solar system is repeated at a distance from us in space so enormous that, "to express it with ordinary arithmetical figures, the writing would occupy a line twenty miles long." He goes on to say, that "the earth of that distant system has a surface divided, as ours is, into five parts, called Europe, Asia, Africa, America, and Oceania. There is also a Rome, a London, a Paris, a New York, a Pekin; all the cities, towns, and villages, inhabited by us here below. The very houses are made after the same architectural pattern, and of the same size as ours: so are the animals, the trees, the stones. In that remote world there is a man of my name, of my age, with my moral and intellectual character, with my own physical features. The other men there resemble also on all points my fellow-men here below. There is, indeed, some exceedingly small difference between them and us, which the All-seeing Deity can perceive; but they resemble us more perfectly than the reflected image in the looking-glass resembles our face. And, although our reflected image is a vain appearance, they are a living reality. At the very moment that thou art reading this volume, thy namesake too is reading these very words in the same book, published there by another mysterious Man like me, even by my very Self, existing there under the same form. Thy living portrait there is now thinking of thee with the same stupid levity, or with the same awful impression—in the same manner, whatever it is—as thou art thinking of him." The writer gives us no reason for believing this wild and spectral dream: we are simply to take it on faith. It is certainly a bewildering idea.

The same author adopts the old opinion that the soul of man is embodied several times in different individualities. Thus, Napoleon the Third has been Lycurgus, Aristotle, St. Paul, Odin, Haroun-al-Raschid, Roger Bacon, Mahomet (the Turkish Sultan who took Constantinople), Descartes, William the Third of England, Robespierre, &c.—altogether a very illustrious line. Our own Queen was formerly Andromache, Hector's wife. And the Conductor of this Journal has already appeared on the stage of the world as Nahum, Seleucus Nicator,

Catullus, Theodorus Duca, Boleslaus, Edward the Third of England, and Rembrandt. These, however, are the fancies of a single mind, and cannot claim the serious investigation due to impressions, however vague, which are common to a considerable proportion of the human race.

THE DIRTY DERBY.

WHEN I think that this is written with unshackled hands in a pleasant library instead of a padded cell, that I am as much in possession of my senses as I ever was, and that I acted under no constraint or obligation—I feel that the world will be naturally incredulous when I record the fact that I went to the last Derby. I blush as I make the statement; but if I had not gone, what could I have done with O'Hone, who had come over from Ballyblether expressly for the event, who had been my very pleasant guest for the three previous days, and who would have been grievously disappointed had he not put in an appearance on the Downs? For O'Hone is decidedly horsey. From the crown of his bell-shaped hat to the sole of his natty boots, taking in his cutaway coat, his long waistcoat, and his tight trousers, there is about him that singular flavour, compounded of stables, starting-bells, posts and rails, trodden grass, metallic memorandum-books, and lobster-salad, which always clings to those gentry whom the press organs are pleased to describe as "patrons of the turf." Since O'Hone has been with me, the stout cob whose services I retain for sanitary purposes, and who is wont to jolt me up the breezy heights of Hampstead or through the green lanes of Willesden, has been devoted to my friend, has undergone an entirely new phase of existence, has learnt to curvet and dance, and has passed a considerable portion of each day in airing himself and his rider in the fashionable Row. For I find it characteristic of all my visitors from the country that while they are in town not merely should they see, but also that they should be seen; there is generally some friend from their country town staying in London at the same time, to whom they like to exhibit themselves to the best advantage, and there is always the local member of parliament, who is called upon and catechised, and whose life, from what I can make out, must be a weary one indeed.

For O'Hone to miss seeing the race would have been wretched, though even then he would not have been worse off than an American gentleman who crossed the Atlantic expressly to attend the Epsom festival, and who, being seized with the pangs of hunger at about half-past two on the Derby Day, entered Mr. Careless's booth and began amusing himself with some edible "fixings" in the way of lunch, in which pleasant task he was still engaged when shouts rent the air, and the American gentleman rushing hatless out of the booth, and finding that the race had been run and was over, burst into the piercing lamentation: "Oh, Jé—rusalem! To

come three thousand miles to eat cold lamb and salad!" But for O'Hone to miss being seen at the race, being recognised by the member, by Tom Durfy now sporting reporter on the press, but erst educated at the Ballyblether Free School, and by the two or three townsmen who were safe to be on the Downs, that would be misery indeed. Moreover, I was dimly conscious of a white hat, and a singular alpaca garment (which gave one the idea that the wearer's tailor had sent home the lining instead of the coat), which I knew had been specially reserved by my friend for the Derby Day; so I determined that, so far as I was concerned, no overt objection to our going to Epsom should be made.

I still, however, retained a latent hope that the sense of impending misery, only too obvious from the aspect of the sky during the two previous days, would have had its natural effect in toning down my impulsive guest; but when I went into his bedroom on the morning of the fatal day, and when I pulled up the blind and made him conscious of the rain pattering against his window, he merely remarked, that "a light animal was no good to-day, anyhow," and I, with a dim internal consciousness that I, albeit a heavy animal, was equally of no good under the circumstances, withdrew in confusion. At breakfast, O'Hone was still appallingly cheerful, referred in a hilarious manner to the "laying of the dust," borrowed my waterproof coat with a gentlemanly assumption which I have only seen rivalled by the light comedian in a rattling farce, and beguiled me into starting, during a temporary cessation of the downfal, after he had made a severe scrutiny of the sky, and had delivered himself of various meteorological observations, in which, when they come from persons residing in the country, I have a wild habit of implicitly believing.

We had promised, the night before, to call for little Iklass, an artist, and one of the pleasantest companions possible when all went well, but who, if it rained, or the cork had come out of the salad dressing, or the salt had been forgotten at a picnic, emerged as Apollyon incarnate. Little Iklass's greatest characteristic being his generous devotion to himself, I knew that the aspect of the morning would prevent him from running the chance of allowing any damp to descend on that sacred form. We found him smoking a pipe, working at his easel, and chuckling at the discomfiture outside. "No, no, boys," said he, "not I! I'll be hanged!"

"Which you weren't this year at the Academy!" I interrupted, viciously; but you can't upset Iklass with your finest sarcasm!

"The same to you, and several of them—no—which I was not—but I will be, if I go to-day! It'll be awfully miserable, and there are three of us, and I dare say you won't always let me sit in the middle, with you to keep the wind off on either side. And I won't go!" And he wouldn't, so we left him, and saw him grinning out of his window, and pointing with his mahl-stick at the skies, whence the rain began to descend again, as we got into the cab.

We went on gloomily enough to the Waterloo station, we passed the Regent Circus and saw some very shy omnibuses with paper placards of "Epsom" on them, empty and ghastly; there was no noise, no excitement, no attempt at joyousness! I remembered the Derbys of by-gone years, and looked dolefully at O'Hone, but he had just bought a "c'ret card," and was deep in statistical calculations.

There was no excitement at the station; we took our places at the tail of a damp little crowd, and took our tickets as though we were going to Birmingham. There was a little excitement on getting into the train of newly varnished carriages destined for our conveyance, for the damp little crowd had been waiting some time, and made a feeble little charge as the train came up. O'Hone and I seized the handle of a passing door, wrenched it open, and jumped in. We were followed by an old gentleman with a long stock and a short temper, an affable stockbroker in a perspiration, and two tremendous swells: in one of whom I recognised the Earl of Wallsend, the noble colliery proprietor. Our carriage is thus legitimately full, but a ponderous woman of masculine appearance and prehensile wrists, hoists herself on to the step, and tumbles in among us. This rouses one of the swells, who remonstrates gently, and urges that there is no room; but the ponderous woman is firm, and not only takes 'vantage-ground herself, but invites a male friend, called John, to join her. "Coom in, Jan! Coom in, tell ye! Coom in, Jan!"—but here the swell is adamant. "No," says he, rigidly, "I'll be deed if John shall come in! Police!" And when the guard arrives, first John is removed, and then the lady, and then the swell says with an air of relief, "Good Heaven! did they think the carriage was a den of wild beasts?"

So, through a quiet stealing rain, the train proceeded, and landed us at last at a little damp rickety station: an oasis of boards in a desert of mud. Sliding down a greasy clay hill we emerged upon the town of Epsom, and the confluence of passengers by rail and by road. We, who had come by the rail, were not lively, we were dull and dreary, but up to this point tolerably dry: in which we had the advantage of those who had travelled by the road, and who were not merely sulky and morose, but wet to their skins. At the Spread Eagle, and at the King's Head, stood the splashed drags with the steaming horses, while their limp occupants tumbled dismally off the roofs and sought temporary consolation in hot brandy-and-water. A dog-cart with two horses driven tandem-fashion, and conveying four little gents, attempted to create an excitement on its entry into the town. One of the little gents on the back seat took a post-horn from its long wicker case and tried to blow it, but the rain, which had gradually been collecting in the instrument, ran into his mouth and choked him, while the leading horse, tempted by the sight of some steaming hay in a trough, turned sharp round and looked its driver piteously in the face, refusing to be comforted,

or, what was more to the purpose, to move on, until it had obtained refreshment. So, on through the dull little town, where buxom women looked with astonishment mixed with pity at the passers-by, and where, at a boot-shop, the cynical proprietor stood in the doorway smoking a long clay pipe, and openly condemned us with a fiendish laugh as "a pack of adjective jackasses;" up the hill, on which the churned yellow mud lay in a foot-deep bath, like egg-flip, and beplastered us wretched pedestrians whenever it was stirred by horses' hoofs or carriage-wheels; skirting the edge of a wheat-field (and a very large edge we made of it before we had finished), the proprietor whereof had erected a few feeble twigs by way of barriers here and there—a delusion and a mockery which the crowd had resented by tearing them up and strewing them in the path; across a perfect Slough of Despond situated between two brick walls, too wide to jump, too terrible to laugh at, a thing to be deliberately waded through with turned-up trousers, and heart and boots that sank simultaneously; a shaking bog, on the side of which stood fiendish boys armed with wisps of straw, with which, for a consideration, they politely proposed to clean your boots.

I didn't want my boots cleaned. I was long past any such attempt at decency. O'Hone was equally reckless; and so, splashed to our eyes, we made our way to the course. Just as we reached the Grand Stand, a rather shabby carriage dashed up to the door, and a howl of damp welcome announced that Youthful Royalty had arrived. Youthful Royalty, presently emerging in a Mackintosh coat, with a cigar in its mouth, proved so attractive that any progress in its immediate vicinity was impossible; so O'Hone and I remained tightly jammed up in a crowd, the component parts of which were lower, worse, and wickeder than I have ever seen. Prize-fighters—not the aristocracy of the ring; not those gentry who are "to be heard of," or whose money is ready; not those who are always expressing, in print, their irrepressible desire to do battle with Konky's Novice at catch-weight, or who have an "Unknown" perpetually walking about in great-coat, previous to smashing the champion—not these, but elderly flabby men with flattened noses and flaccid skins and the seediest of great-coats buttoned over the dirtiest of Jerseys;—racing touts, thin wiry sharp-faced little men with eyes strained and bleary from constant secret watching of racers' gallops;—dirty, battered tramps, sellers of cigar-lights and c'ret cards;—pickpockets, shifty and distrustful, with no hope of a harvest from their surroundings;—and "Welsers," who are the parody on Tattersall's and the Ring, who are to the Jockey Club and the Enclosure what monkeys are to men—poor pitiful varlets in greasy caps and tattered coats, whose whole wardrobe would be sneered at in Holywell-street or Rag Fair, and who yet are perpetually bellowing, in hoarse ragged tones, "I'll bet against the field!" "I'll bet

against Li-bellous!" "I'll bet against the Merry Maid!" "I'll bet against any one, bar one!" Nobody seemed to take their bets, nobody took the slightest notice of their offers, and yet they bellowed away until the race was run, in every variety of accent—in Cockney slang, in Yorkshire harshness, in Irish brogue. These were the only members of the crowd, thoroughly intent on their business; for all the rest Youthful Royalty had an immense attraction.

Sliding and slithering about on the sloping ground where turf had been and where now mud was, they pushed, and hustled, and jumped up to look over each other's heads. "Vich is 'im? Vich is 'im?" "Not 'im! That's the late Duke o' Vellinton! There's the Prince a blowin' his bacca like a man!" "Ain't he dry, neither?" "Ain't I? Vonder vether he'd stand a drain?" "He wouldn't look so chuff if he vos down here, with this moisture a tricklin' on his 'ed?" "Who's the hold bloke in barnacles?" "That—that's Queen Hann!" No wet, no poverty, no misery, could stop the crowd's chaff; and amidst it all still rang out the monotonous cry of the "Welshers"—"I'll bet against Li-bellous?" "I'll bet against the field!"

A dull thudding on the turf, a roar from the neighbouring stand, and the simultaneous disappearance of all the "Welshers," tells us—for we can see nothing—that the first race is over, and that we can move towards the hill. Motion is slow; for, the crowd surging on to the course is met by a crowd seething off it, and when I do fight to the front, I have to dip under a low rail, and come out on the other side, like a diver. The course was comparatively dry, and just as we emerged upon it a large black overhanging cloud lifted like a veil, and left a bright, unnatural, but not unpromising, sky. O'Hone brightened simultaneously, and declared that all our troubles were over; we gained the hill, worked our way through the lines of carriages, received a dozen invitations to lunch, took a glass or two of sherry as a preliminary instalment, and settled down for the Derby. The old preparations annually recurring—the bell to clear the course, the lagging people, the demonstrative police, the dog (four different specimens this year at different intervals, each with more steadfastness of purpose to run the entire length of the course than I have ever seen previously exhibited), the man who, wanting to cross, trots half way, is seized and brought back in degradation; the man who says or does something obnoxious (nobody ever knows what) to his immediate neighbours just before the race, and is thereupon bonneted, and kicked, and cuffed into outer darkness; the yelling Ring; the company on the Hill, purely amateurish, with no pecuniary interest beyond shares in a five shilling sweepstakes, and divided between excitement about the race and a desire for lunch; the entrance of the horses from the paddock, the preliminary canter—all the old things, with one new feature—new to me at least—THE RAIN! No mistake about it;

down, down it came in straight steady pour; no blinking it, no "merely a shower," no hint at "laying the dust;" it asserted its power at once, it defied you to laugh at it, it defied you to fight against it, it meant hopeless misery, and it carried out its meaning. Up with the hoods of open carriages, out with the rugs, up with the aprons, unfurl umbrellas on the top of the drags; shiver and crouch Monsieur Le Sport, arrived via Folkestone last night—poor Monsieur Le Sport, in the thin paletot and the curly-brimmed hat down which the wet trickles, and the little jean boots with the shiny tips and the brown-paper soles, already pappy and sodden; cower under your canvas wall, against which no sticks at three a penny will rattle to-day—O, gipsy tramp, run to the nearest drinking-booth—O, band of niggers, piebald with the wet! For one mortal hour do we stand on the soaked turf in the pouring rain, with that horrid occasional shiver which always accompanies wet feet, waiting for a start to be effected. Every ten minutes, rises a subdued murmur of hope, followed by a growl of disappointment. At last they are really "off," and for two minutes we forget our misery. But it comes upon us with redoubled force when the race is over, and there is nothing more to look forward to.

Lunch? Nonsense! Something to keep off starvation, if you like—a bit of bread and a chicken's wing—but no attempt at sociality. One can't be humorous inside a close carriage with the windows up and the rain battering on the roof! Last year it was iced champagne, claret-cup, and silk overcoats; now, it ought to be hot brandy-and-water, foot-baths, and flannels. Home! Home, across the wheat-field, now simple squash; down the hill, now liquid filth; through the town, now steaming like a laundress's in full work; home by the train with other silent sodden miserable wretches; home in a cab, past waiting crowds of jeering cynics, who point the finger and take the sight, and remark, "Ain't they got it, neither!" and "Water-rats this lot!"—home to hot slippers, dry clothes, a roaring fire, and creature-comforts, and a stern determination never again to "do" a dirty Derby.

PERSIAN MANNERS.

THE manner of conducting business generally among the Persians is childish and dilatory. No man sets the smallest value on his own words, or on those of anybody else. They look upon words as playthings. Their conversation with equals and superiors is usually dictated by a desire to please, and they will utter anything which they consider most likely to attain this object, entirely regardless of fact. If convicted of a direct lie, they say with a shrug, "I have eaten dirt," which merely means "I have been found out," and there's an end of it.

In every transaction of life, the same insincerity is observable. A tradesman will coolly ask twenty times as much for his wares as he would be really glad to take, and this does not

at all surprise the customer; who, in turn, offers a twentieth part of the price he is willing to pay. Both parties then begin to make the bargain the principal object of their lives, and will invent the most extraordinary stories to avoid concluding it. They will hide away from each other for days to obtain better terms, or in mere wantonness. No transaction can be ended without a large concourse of people being mixed up in it, and oceans of talk and manoeuvring. The Persians have no idea of the worth of time. Nobody ever dreams of keeping an appointment.

The Persians are, moreover, a remarkably impudent people—of a naïve and simple kind of impudence very provoking. A short time ago they had just found out an odd trick of answering diplomatic correspondents on every subject by sending them literal word for word translations out of Vattel and Martens. For a long time foreigners could not understand where upon earth this light-headed people obtained the dreary erudition which they so ostentatiously displayed upon all occasions. But at last it was discovered that there was an obscure meerza (scribe) then employed in their Foreign Office who was entrusted with the task of puzzling their correspondents. His method was simple and effective. Whenever foreign diplomatists sent a despatch, this person referred to one of the old French or German casuists for anything which might directly or indirectly be construed into language having reference to the subject upon which they had written, and then he came down upon them with a bulky essay which was of course no answer at all. They had also a certain childish craft in their dealings with foreigners, and were in the habit of menacing Europeans in any difficulty with the anger of the mob, referring to the massacre of the Russian embassy, in 1828, with open triumph. They kept this threat in constant readiness for them as a kind of bogey.

Business of all kinds is of course much impeded by the general want of education and the difficulty of correspondence. The meerzas are a class apart, and pursuing a distinct and recognised profession—the immemorial Oriental calling of the scribe. Letters and other documents, instead of being folded for transmission, are closely rolled and are sealed by means of a narrow strip of strong paper like a piece of ribbon or tape wound tightly around the middle of the roll and attached by a species of wax or gum. A seal bearing the name or titles of the writer is sometimes impressed with ink upon the roll where it is fastened. The superscription is written with the pen near one end. The seal with ink is used within, instead of the written signature of the author; though sometimes both are inserted. The extensive use and high importance of the seal in the East forcibly illustrates the figures of Scripture, which attach to it such sacred solemnity and authority. The profession of the meerzas is an important one, the higher classes in Persia disliking the drudgery of using the pen, and the

lower orders being too ignorant to do their own writing. The lower class of merchants usually keep their accounts, write their own letters, and use their own seal; but all the large traders employ meerzas.

The principal merchants carry on their business with a cypher, and every person has a different one. For in a country where there are no regular posts, their letters must be trusted to couriers, who might be easily bribed by a small sum to betray their secrets to commercial rivals; and it is of great consequence that they should have the first intelligence of political changes about which they would fear to write openly. The authenticity of a merchant's letters, as of his bills, depends entirely upon the seal. It is not usual to sign either; and they are not often written in the hand of the person who sends them, so that it is the seal only which is of importance. Engraven upon it is the name and the title, if he has one, of the person it belongs to, and the date when it was cut. The occupation of seal-cutter is one of much trust and some danger. The seal-cutter keeps a register of every seal he makes, and if one is stolen or lost by the party to whom he sold it, his life would answer for the crime of making another exactly the same. The person to whom it belongs, if in business, is obliged to take the most respectable witnesses of the occurrence, and to write to his correspondents declaring all accounts and business with his former seal null from the day upon which it was lost.

Copying manuscripts also opens a wide field of labour for the meerzas, as well as for the lower orders of the mollahs. The Persian pen is a small hollow reed instead of a quill; the latter would be likely to cut the paper in the heavy hand of Eastern penmen.

The beauty of Persian manuscripts has long been celebrated. Sir William Jones was so enraptured with them that he almost wished the art of printing had never been invented. The Persians are able to write with a fineness and distinctness that utterly defy imitation with type. I have seen the whole of the Koran written on two strips of fine Chinese paper three inches wide, and perhaps ten feet long, written not "within and without," but only on one side, which, when rolled up, made a roll a little larger than the finger. Still every letter was fully formed and perfectly legible. The Persians now usually write their manuscripts in the form of volumes rather than rolls. And the art of printing is rapidly superseding the profession of copyists. Some of the Nestorians are also able to use their pen with elegance, and the bolder stroke and square form of the Syriac character which they use, appear in even finer relief than the Persian letters. It would need good paper and good type to compete with these copyists in matters of taste sufficiently to meet the fastidiousness of "old school" men, and particularly of the copyists themselves; whose business is so much endangered by the innovation of printing. The process of writing by hand in this elegant style is of course very slow; and

manuscripts so written are highly prized and very difficult to be procured.

In addition to writing, the meerzas perform other important services. They stand before their master during his daily levee, and when not engaged in writing, echo his oracular sayings, or lead a chorus in doing it; which is made up usually of a train of dependents that come to make their bow to their superior, and give him their selâm. I never understood the full import of sycophancy until I witnessed it in these Persian meerzas, most obsequiously nodding at every word their master utters, and interposing once or twice in the course of every sentence, "Beyley" (to be sure), "Albetdeh" (of course). To pronounce an opinion themselves, before it had come from his lips, would be the height of arrogance and presumption. The meerzas have also in general the responsibility of communicating intelligence to their master. If this happens to be of an unpleasant nature, the announcement of it is no welcome or easy task, and must be palliated by all the rhetorical skill which the practised sycophant can command. On extraordinary occasions, men of the highest rank, as well as the most celebrated for eloquence, are employed for this purpose. When the late war was concluded between Russia and Persia, the heir apparent, who had the management of the foreign relations of the country, engaged to pay to the Russian government several kroor of tomauns. I forget the number, but believe the amount to have been nearly two millions sterling, to induce that government to recal its troops from Persia, and accede to the conditions of peace. It was some time a question who could go and report these terms to the king, the impression being general, that whoever should bear such tidings to his majesty would lose his head on the spot. The governor of Tabreez, a celebrated orator, was at length appointed to the perilous service. He approached the old Shah with all due courtesy and ceremony, and told him that "he was commissioned by his exalted son, the Naib-Sultan, to propose to his majesty, the admiration of the world, that he should throw out a trifle, say perhaps two millions sterling or so, from his inexhaustible treasury, to those poor miserable hungry Russian infidels, and let them go home." The herald was dismissed without harm or disgrace, though the "inexhaustible treasury" was soon emptied in meeting the demand. One instalment, a fifth of the whole sum, remained long unpaid, and the Russians held the fertile district of Khoy in pledge as security for it.

Sometimes unwelcome intelligence is announced to the king through the medium of emblems, as well as by exalted personages. Such was the case in communicating to the Shah news of the death of his favourite brother, Kahrâman-Meerza. A painting was made representing the deceased prince in as perfect likeness as possible, in the habiliments of death. This picture was carried by the English and Russian ambassadors, and laid before the king, not a word being spoken. It is said that the

Shah at once took the hint (he had heard of his brother's illness before), that he swooned, and was carried into his anderoon (harem), where he remained, not appearing in public for three days.

The death of friends is often kept studiously concealed by the meerzas and others from their masters as long as possible. The governor of Oroomiah once returned from a journey three months after the death of a favourite son. After being greeted on his arrival by the rest of his family, he inquired for the little boy, and a violent burst of grief from all present was the first intimation he had that the child was dead. On asking his meerza, who had regularly written to him, and reported his family as well, why he had not told him the truth? the latter replied that he was reluctant to give the bereaved father pain; and the benevolence of his motives excused him for the concealment. It is often very affecting to witness the efforts in Persia to keep from sick friends the extent of their danger. They are always assured that they are in a fair way to recover, and are lulled in security until the lamp of life actually expires; when a scene of raving lamentations ensues among the relatives and connexions that proclaims with awful emphasis the entire absence of that hope, which blunts the sting of death, and sheds light and solace around the darkness of the tomb.

Unbusiness-like as they are in every transaction of life, vain, ostentatious, and lavish, yet the Persian's love of money amounts almost to a mania, and they resort to the oddest devices to gratify it. Everything in Persia, even human life, has a money value. The prince-governor of Kermanshah got into a scrape, and a deputation succeeded, after much difficulty, in finding their way to Tehran to complain of him. Fearing the interest against him was too strong to be trifled with, he sent fifteen thousand tomauns as a bribe to the prime minister. The minister put aside ten thousand for himself, and then went with the remaining five thousand to the king. "The governor of Kermanshah," said the covetous old man to his sovereign, "has sent five thousand tomauns here as a present, two thousand for your majesty, two thousand for me towards the expenses of the state, and a thousand for my son, to whom he is indebted. He is a poor man, however, and Kermanshah is a poor government. So I have returned my two thousand, and I have ordered my son to return the money which has been repaid to him. What! are the remaining two thousand for the centre of the universe? Will your majesty not send back your two thousand also?"

"Belli! belli!" (yes, yes!) said the king, kindly, and the Sadr-azem got for himself the whole fifteen thousand. He then caused the deputation to be bastinadoed for making frivolous complaints against the best of governors, and dismissed them with a terrible countenance. It would seem at first sight that he might have appropriated the fifteen thousand tomauns without any artifice at all; but this would not have been in accordance with the peculiar genius of

his countrymen, who love intrigues and round-about ways, whether necessary or not. A little management in such a case was also not unadvisable, lest the king should hear that money had been sent, and make some inquiry about it.

Presents, however, may go too far for prudence, and governors who send the revenues of their provinces in advance, are apt to be displaced. Presents may also be too few; the governor of a province was reminded of this once rather roughly. He was sent for to court and beaten.

"Why," asked the prime minister of the smarting wretch—"why have you not sent the taxes of your province?"

"I have sent them," replied the governor, moaning piteously.

"But your own tax," replied the minister, "you have not sent."

The giving of presents is so much a part of the manners and customs of the Persians, that they sometimes offer very strange gifts indeed. Among other things, a man once brought to a member of the English embassy his son, whom he wished to confer as a present, with great formality. He seemed quite surprised when the gift was declined.

Amidst all this rapacity the public revenue is really loosely collected and extravagantly and foolishly wasted. For instance, a *barat* is a bill issued by the government and drawn on the governor of a province. It is supposed to be drawn for a portion of the revenue then due from that province. Of course many more *barats* are issued than the amount of revenue available at the time to meet them. These *barats* are, therefore, passed usually to persons of influence, at a depreciation of seventy to eighty per cent. They are then forced on the small officials at their full value, in payment for salaries, and pensions, and public creditors, and ultimately find their way into the hands of the Armenian bankers, who buy them up for a mere nothing, and wait for a favourable opportunity to obtain their nominal worth.

But no matter how a Persian gets his money, or how much he gets, he is sure to squander it. His love of fine clothes and silly trinkets is a passion, and his ostentation is only equalled by his meanness. The greatest princes in the land asked Malcolm the value of the magnificent presents which he brought from India; returned them publicly, lest they should be obliged to share with anybody, and then privately asked for them back again. A Persian magnate loads his wives and concubines with jewels,* he covers the trappings of his horse with solid gold and gems. His pipe is of gold and jewels. His very walking-stick, on state occasions, is covered with diamonds. He keeps numbers of servants; and, although they are content to serve him, like the Roman client, for his protection, yet he must generally feed and clothe them. Though he is lavish, yet he is avaricious and cruel. The tor-

tures used by government to wring money from people suspected of being rich are sometimes horrible, and the devices to which they resort for the same purpose are almost comic. Of the latter, take the following for an example. After the late war, the Persian government, desiring to annoy us, secretly forbade the merchants in the interior to supply the English with money, and an official party passing through Meshed was likely to have been much inconvenienced, had not the cupidity of an Armenian prevailed over his fear, and induced him to cash a bill on the Indian government. He was of course found out. The petty local tyrant immediately sent for him, and demanded one hundred toman, saying, dryly, that "as he was rich enough to supply the English with money, he could of course relieve the wants of a countryman."

There is really very little wealth left in the East in comparison with the poorest of European countries. Even that which does exist is unproductive. Most of the money is buried in holes and secret hiding-places; whence, if the owner dies suddenly, it perhaps never returns to the light of day, for it would hardly be safe for a man to trust his nearest relative with the secret of his hiding-place; there being little enough of affection or confidence in families. The fear of tyranny which prompts the concealment of property, must have lost immense sums for ever in this way. So common is the practice of burying money and valuables, that there exists a class of persons who prowl all their lives about mountains and strange out-of-the-way places in search of hidden treasure, and often a poor man grows suddenly rich, who has stumbled on a forgotten hiding-place of money. Of the floating wealth, much is spent on toys, or personal adornment, on horses, on women. The Persian is not a trader. The Parsees of India, the Armenians, and a few Greeks, have all the trade of the country in their hands. The foreign trade has been for years in the hands of the great Greek house of Ralli. Fortunes are, however, to be made in a petty way by shrewd people. Money bears an immense interest. Twelve per cent per month is not at all uncommon. But then money cannot be lent in large sums, for no Persian can offer satisfactory security. For instance, a mortgage on land would have no value whatever in Persia. Mortgages of houses, even at Tehran, would be doubtful. For no debt could be recovered under any circumstances from a person who had a friend in the prime minister, or the high priest. The creditor would be put off with some high-sounding phrase, and sent about his business. If he made himself troublesome he would be bastinadoed, and the fact of his having lent money pointing him out as a rich man, would probably awaken the cupidity of the authorities; who would take away anything he had left. Thus even banking and money-lending is but a huckster's trade in Persia. Those who drive it, contrive, in the first place, to get the ear of the minister. Then they cautiously

* The weight of gold and silver coins on a woman's person is sometimes worth ten or twelve pounds.

advance loans on the deposit of jewels, which they take without giving any receipt for them. This being portable property, which can be carried away or hidden, does very well. Many of the finest jewels of the Kajar family, the reigning dynasty, have been pawned and lost in this way. There is another trade more venturesome, chiefly managed by Armenians, as in Turkey. They lend money to persons about the court to enable them to purchase governorships of provinces, and the fearful extortions we often hear of in the East are practised chiefly for the emolument of these terrible usurers. There is no escape from them; for they contrive by judicious presents, and crafty management, to render all who can be of use to them their protectors; and the haughtiest of the Oriental satraps is usually but a mere puppet in the hands of some Armenian pawnbroker, to satisfy whose demands gold is wrung out of the blood and sweat of the miserable population inhabiting countries which a good government might render an earthly paradise. In the reign of Mahomet-Shah a firman was issued limiting interest on money to twelve per cent per annum, but nobody paid attention to it.

It is still customary to weigh money in Persia. The nominal value and the real worth of coins often differing very widely, from the practice of clipping and defacing. Russian gold coins, in many parts of Persia, are more numerous than tomanas, although the Russian gold is of an inferior quality to the Persian toman, which is, when undefaced, a very pretty and a very pure piece of money. As no reliance can be placed on the value of any coin after it has once been put in circulation, and as some of the devices for sweating it are too ingenious for discovery except by the test of actual weights and scales, accounts are involved in much confusion, and there is great trouble in effecting a just settlement with anybody. Shawls, which are usually given as presents, are a kind of currency, the seller binding himself to take them back at a fixed price.

THUNDER.

JOHN MILTON, in his description of the opening of the gates of Pandemonium, says, they "on their hinges grate harsh thunder that the lowest bottom shook of Erebus," and so limited is the geographical range of thunder when compared with the range of English literature, that his poem of *Paradise Lost* is now read in countries, the untravellers natives of which have no idea, from their personal observation or experience, of the nature of the sound called thunder. The aerial clothing, in which the planet earth travels in space, differs so vastly in different regions, that there are climates in which the sound of thunder is never heard, and climates in which, on the contrary, listening ears may hear the celestial bass continually and perpetually. Like the song of a bird, thunder has its range.

The traveller due north, when he crosses the border between England and Scotland, leaves the songs of the nightingales behind him; and when he passes Labrador, where the shore larks breed among the stones and lichens, Spitzbergen and Nova Zembla, or from the sixty-fifth degree to the parallel of the seventy-fifth degree north latitude, the clouds cease to growl forth their grand old melodies. And it is not only in the coldest northern latitudes that the clouds become dumb. Modern observations have not confirmed the statements of Pliny in reference to Egypt, nor of Plutarch respecting Ethiopia; but the inhabitants of Lima, in Peru, never hear thunder nor see lightning. "If I cannot name," says M. Arago, "any place within the warm or temperate regions of the old continent where thunder is never heard, it is quite otherwise in America. The untraveller inhabitants of Lima, in Peru, can, from their own experience, form no idea of thunder. And they are equally unacquainted with lightning, for even noiseless and sheet lightnings never appear in the atmosphere of Lower Peru, which, although often misty, never shows true clouds." A consideration which makes the limitations of the range of thunder and lightning appear more wonderful is the fact that, wherever there is rubbing there is electricity, or the pushings and pullings of invisible influences, observed first by the ancient Greeks as characteristics of amber or electron. Whenever matter is disturbed, mechanically, chemically, or calorifically, repulsions and attractions occur; and yet, on the east coast of Peru, and in the Arctic regions, friction in the air never produces thunder and lightning, whilst the name of the Acroceraunian mountains signifies the mountains of the thunder-storms. And such is the variety of nature, that the colour of lightning is different in different atmospheres. The colour is generally dazzling white, and is often yellow or blue in our summer skies, whilst in thin pure hot air it is violet or rose colour. During the trade-winds thunder-storms are almost unknown.

Local causes determine greatly the geography of storms. At Paris, the mean number of thundery days is fourteen, and at Denainvilliers it is twenty-one, a year. I know not whether or no recent observations have confirmed the opinions of Mr. Dillwyn, who, in the beginning of this century, maintained that where there were many metallic mines, as at Swansea and in North Devonshire, storms are very rare, and where there occurred few or no mines, storms were comparatively frequent. He was also of opinion that storms were more frequent in limestone than in other countries. Where there is iron in the rocks, as in greenstone, it has been supposed to have some effect in dispersing thunder-clouds. M. Arago, who thought the neighbourhood of mountains a cause of storms, was of opinion that their frequency lessens as we sail from land until a certain distance is reached, far out at sea, where they never occur.

From personal experience, I can testify that lightning travels in what may be called currents of air, or drafts. Lightning and thunder are visible and audible effects, which occur in crowds of differing gaseous or aerial globules. They are lights and sounds elicited by the crush of globules. Lightning, it has been recorded, has been known to go in a straight line a distance of three miles, and a person was once killed by what is called the "back stroke," at a distance of twenty miles from the explosion. But this expression—the back stroke—is, I submit, a misleading metaphor, for we all know that there is nothing in storm-like the back stroke of an oar, a hammer, sword, or arm. During the last three or four years, the theory that lightning is an effect of aerial friction has been gaining ground, for we find Mrs. Somerville, in the edition of her *Physical Geography*, published in 1862, saying: "Electricity of each kind is probably elicited by the friction of currents of air." The lines, forks, zig-zags, sheets, or balls of lightning, mark, therefore, the course or direction of the crushings, rubbings, and squeezings in the crowds of igniting and exploding globules. The "back stroke" ought, therefore, to be sent with the "electric fluid," "the charge," the "thunderbolt of Jupiter," and the "hammer of Thor," into the museum of scientific antiquities; which contains "flogiston" and "the philosopher's stone." Some seven years ago I was standing for shelter from a storm of thunder and rain in a coach entry near the Elysian Fields in Paris. The gate of the entry was folded and fastened back, and the wind blew very fiercely through it. Out of each side of the entry were doors admitting to the staircases of the houses. Other persons who sought shelter along with myself got out of the strong wind blowing through the coach entry as quickly as possible, and remained inside the doors of the houses. But I remained right in the middle of the entry, sometimes at the street end and sometimes at the court end, watching the clouds and the lightning, and counting the seconds between the flash and the report. The storm seemed everywhere. I was in the midst of it, and expected to have an opportunity of seeing a tree struck by lightning, when I observed the persons clustered on one of the door-steps observing me and talking seriously. Presently a young artisan stepped out and up to me, risking, as he knew and was soon proved, his own life to warn me, and explained that lightning frequently passed through the coach entries of Paris. We had scarcely both got inside a door in the side of the entry, when an oblong square of lightning, the shape of the entry, reduced greatly, was borne by the wind swiftly through it. A tree was shattered by that storm within fifty yards of where I stood; but, as I escaped a manifest danger, I have been consoled by this reflection for the loss of the opportunity of witnessing the thunder-stroke. Another experience furnishes still more decisive proof of the fact that the course of lightning is along the line

of globular crowding produced by drafts. On the 20th May, 1859, a memorable thunder-storm burst on Brighton, and destroyed Streeter's windmill on the Dyke Road. The east and west cliffs of Brighton are divided by a valley running north and south, and along the northern end of this valley runs the London Road. I then lived in the tallest house of this road. The southerly winds blew the clouds along this road, and where the obstacles were, at the Lion mansion, at my residence, and at Streeter's mill, the lightnings were most notable. This was the line of the crowding from the confining of the globules. The drawing-room of the house in question has two tall windows, and against the wall between them I had placed my upright desk, and at this desk I was standing writing, my attention being occasionally distracted from my work by the flashes of lightning, by the rattling peals of thunder, and by seeing the road turned into a river. Two ladies were also in the room, one reading at the table, and the other sewing on the sofa. It was then that a flash or ball of lightning came down the chimney, grazed close by my right shoulder, and leapt out at the top of the window. For the sake of ventilation, the mouth of the chimney was not stopped up, and this window was drawn down from the top. The ladies who saw the lightning issue from the chimney, said it had then the form of the aperture through which it came, and I who saw it leave, observed it assume the form of the aperture through which it went.

These personal observations of mine leave no doubt in my mind that one of the things which determine the course of lightning is the crowding, cramming, squeezing, crushing, and rubbing of the thick-packed and close jammed globules. Poets are not philosophers, nor are they always observers, but they are, when good poets, the repeaters of philosophy and observation, the melodious echoes of thought and insight; and in one of his couplets I find Mr. Alfred Tennyson, when describing the gathering of a thunder-storm, using the word *cramming*:

Comes a vapour from the margin, blackening over
heath andholt,

Cramming all the blast before it; in its breast a
thunderbolt.

Now that we know that thunder has no bolt, the word "thunderbolt" is as disagreeable to the mind as the word "cramming" is pleasing to it, a fact which shows that truth is as important to the pleasures of literature as to the satisfaction of science. A quotation from one poet is apt enough to suggest another. Shakespeare makes King Lear say

Yon sulphurous and thought-executing fires,
'Vaunt couriers of oak-cleaving thunderbolts,
Singe my white head! and then all shaking
thunder,

Strike flat the thick rotundity o' the world.

Knowing, as we do, that lightning leaves a sulphurous smell behind it, and that it cleaves trees and singes hair, and that thunder, by the power

of its vibrations, shakes all things, these phrases have the force and the felicity of truth; which the other phrases have not.

Nothing is more curious in the phenomena of lightning than its effects on hair. Lear invokes the lightning to singe his white hairs, and whether Shakespeare knew the fact or not, lightning is influenced by colour, and sings by preference white hair. An ox of a reddish colour spotted with white, was struck by lightning, and not the slightest injury was done to the red hair, whilst not a hair was left upon the white spots. These singular effects occurred twice to two separate oxen, at Swanborough, in Sussex, in the years 1772 and 1774. On the 20th September, 1773, at Glynd, a horse was struck by lightning. He was a dappled horse. When his owner examined him, after the attack, all his hair of every other hue remained fast, while the hair on the white streaks and spots came clean off at a touch. May not this difference be caused by the absence of the colouring matter, or oil, making white hairs drier and more easily burnt than coloured hair? There is a case mentioned by Kundmann of a young girl, the brass bodkin in whose hair was fused by lightning, and yet her hair was not burnt.

Captains Peytier and Hossard were, on the 15th June, 1825, in a thunder-storm on the Pyrenees, which lasted six hours. For a short time, the tassels in their caps and their hair stood on end. And on the 31st of August, 1826, they were in a storm in which lightning struck a ptarmigan hung by one of their guides by a string upon a wooden pole: the top of the pole was charred, and the feathers of the bird were stripped off from the beak to the tail. Residents in Brighton are not likely soon to forget the storm which flooded Pool Valley in 1850. The lightning of that storm burnt a hole, such as a red-hot rifle bullet might burn, through the bushy whisker of a man who was out in the storm. I record this fact on the testimony of the late Dr. Williamson, from whom I had it, and to whom the man went immediately with his seathed cheek.

Father Feyjoo relates, in the *Cartas Eruditas*, that lightning passed near a young man named Juan Francisco Menandez Miranda. He was not in the least hurt, yet his hair began falling off immediately afterwards, and in a few days none remained upon his body.

One more example of the effects of lightning upon hair. The particulars were supplied by the sufferer himself to M. Arago. Captain Rihouet was the second in command of the frigate *Golymin*, on the 21st February, 1812, when she was sailing out of the harbour of L'Orient. The vessel was struck by lightning, and the captain received several injuries on the head. "The next day," he says, "when I wished to shave, I found that my razor, instead of cutting my beard, pulled the hairs out by the roots, and since then I have had no beard. The hair on my head, on

my eyebrows, and on my eyelashes, all the hair on my body, in fact, came gradually away by the roots, and did not grow again. The nails on my fingers scaled away during the following year (1813), but those on my feet underwent no change."

Thus without the invocation of any Lear, lightning sings white hair. There is indeed no reason for supposing that the hair of the young Juan Miranda was white; but there are young people who inherit a predisposition to baldness, while the captain was no longer young, and the red oxen and the dappled horse lost none but the hairs on their white spots. It is scarcely, moreover, necessary to remind the reader of the physiological analogy between feathers and hairs; or that the winter plumage of the ptarmigan is pure white. Belonging to the grouse, partridge, and quail group, this bird is called the "white grouse."

These facts point to a most interesting and enchanting region of scientific research, into which I cannot enter the chemistry of lightning. Chemists can produce, whenever they choose, substances, one of which shines with a pale and almost perpetual light, another of which needs only to be exposed to the air to glow brilliantly, and a third which flames forth the moment it touches water or ice; and the preferences or apparent caprices of lightning, the selection of metals and colours or a colour, seem to be analogous phenomena. Chemistry, electricity, and caloric touch each other so closely, that there can be no difficulty in admitting the common belief that certain trees are more liable to be struck by lightning than others, but what these trees are is still an unsettled question. Men who fell forest timber, from the splits they find, infer that trees of all kinds are much more frequently struck by lightning than is generally supposed. The Chinese deem the mulberry and the beech good preservatives against lightning. The epithet "oak-cleaving," which Shakespeare applies to the thunderbolt, has been supported by observers, who have said that the oak, the elm, the pine, and the chestnut are often, the ash rarely, and the beech, birch, and maple never, struck. The laurel, it was believed, was never seathed by lightning. Tiberius, on this account, wore a laurel crown, and no doubt found it cooler and safer than any metal one would have been. Modern observation, however, supplies us with no reasons for believing that any tree whatever is absolutely safe from lightning.

Most of the trees and shrubs which I have examined, after they have been struck by lightning, have been cleft or shattered by it, but in a garden at Preston, near Brighton, I saw in 1859 certain shrubs, some nailed up against the wall and others alone, which seemed blighted, shrivelled, withered, scorched, as if the lightning had dried up their sap or cambium. The effects have generally been merely mechanical, but in this instance they were chemical. The shrubs had not been struck, they had been blasted. The

lightning-cleft trees were merely dismembered, but the shrubs were killed. Was it by the sudden destruction of their leaves, their respiratory organs? Or was it by decomposing their sap, or their cambium? The poison of serpents, it has been ascertained, acts by dissolving the blood, and it may be that lightning has similar effects upon the vegetable and animal victims it kills.

As yet we know nothing satisfactory respecting the nature of death by lightning. Physiologists present us with nothing better than guesses. A story has been imported into books of a case in which a man, struck by lightning, appeared to have had his skull crushed in, as if by a blow from a bludgeon; but the liabilities to error are too great for such a statement to be received without strong proofs. Trees are cleft, because whilst the globules are close packed and jammed together, the rubbing amongst them causes a sudden explosion or expansion of them. After this kind of death, decomposition, it has been said by some, takes place slowly; and others say it appears rapidly. One of the more probable of the guesses is the notion that death is caused by the burning of the oxygen in the lungs. I may throw out another: paralysis is one of the most frequent effects of lightning. These strokes of paralysis affect not merely legs and arms, they attack the nerves of hearing and seeing. The shock of the lightning has only, then, to paralyse the respiratory nerves and reach the spot of grey matter, which is their centre (but the size of a pin's head), and which is called upon the Continent the vital knot, to produce instant death.

Many cases have occurred of persons being struck by lightning without their being aware of it. Thomas Oliver, a Cornish farmer, being thrown down upon the ground, in 1752, after lying insensible for a quarter of an hour, on coming to himself, asked, "Who knocked me down?" "I heard nothing, and I saw nothing," has been the testimony of many persons of different periods and nations on recovering from their swoon. Nor is the explanation of this strange fact far off. Light, it has been ascertained, travels eighty thousand leagues per second; and lightning much faster. Measured by the musical notes its vibrations produced, Professor Wheatstone's wheel performed eight hundred revolutions per second, and, of course, to the eye, its spokes were invisible; but an electric flash revealed them as if standing still! The result of philosophical experiments respecting the time which sensations take on their way along the nerves to the brain, although we say "quick as thought" show that they are comparatively very slow. The experiments are far from being satisfactory, owing to the shortness of the nerves; but there can be no doubt of the relative results: that sensation travels six or eight times more slowly than sound, which is seventy or eighty times slower than light, the vastly swift one far outsped by lightning. When, therefore, lightning kills, it strikes unseen, and

the sound following it, the thunder, may, without any stretch of imagination, be deemed the requiem of its victims.

THE LAST OF THE ALCHEMISTS.

"HE a making of gold! well, I'm sure; but it's always the way; them as has orchards has apples given 'em. A dean making gold! plague take him! I wonder if good luck ever came to a poor verger? I wonder how many years I might have sat puffing at fires and holding up bottles to the light before I had found out how to make gold? And won't the dean's daughter queen it now? Get off the grass there, you brats!"

These words issued from the mouth of a crabbed verger of Salisbury Cathedral, one March day, in the year 1787, about half an hour before the bell sounded for afternoon service. The envious verger's mind ran on a tavern rumour he had just heard that Dean Price had, after years of chemical experiments, at last actually hit upon the way of making gold, and indeed had even been lately summoned to London to explain to King George himself the extraordinary and invaluable discovery. He had been shaking up his rusty black-tufted gown on his shoulders as he passed through a low battlemented gateway, and as he entered the quiet cathedral close he half unconsciously uttered these expressions of querulous envy, ending abruptly with that denunciation of some playing children that served as an outvent of his spite.

Yet it was a tranquil spot, full of sleepy happiness, that garden square that girded round that monument of a dead world's adoration—the old cathedral. If the red brick houses, bound with white limestone, had been embalmed, they could not have looked more still and dead. The soft sunshine lay asleep on the broad squares of close-cropped and orderly grass; no breeze stirred the young leaves in the canon's gardens, or shook down a pink leaf from the apricot bloom. The feet of the awestruck children in a distant corner of the cathedral gravel-walk yielded no sound, or one so soft that it was overpowered by the cawing of the rooks, as in the fussy agitation of nest-building time they fluttered and toppled about the budding boughs of the great elms, with a ceaseless noise that had for many a year lulled fat canons to after-dinner naps, sounder even than those of their Sunday congregations.

High up in the soft warm spring air, above the high grey roof of the nave, rose the spire, like a fountain that some magic had petrified and fixed there for ever. In foreign cities, cathedrals might be found more loaded with grotesque ornament, more beautiful in detail, more abounding in architectural ingenuities and eccentricities, but nowhere a spire so exquisite in proportions, or a Christian temple with which time and man had dealt so gently. Clean cut and sharp as a casket rose the grey walls of the choir from the fresh green turf. One might

almost, in a flight of fancy, have supposed that an immense glass case had been kept over the building for centuries, and had only just been removed.

The same almost Dutch spirit of neatness that pervaded the cathedral and its circumjacent lawn, pervaded also the canons' residences that hemmed in the close. No future martyrs, or confessors, or anchorites, or St. Jeromes, or St. Anthonys, lived there, but the snug, portly, high feeding, well-intentioned, not too over-zealous clergy of the early part of George the Third's reign. The dean's house, that larger one on the extreme right of the close, just where the verger stood, was a special and crowning instance of this luxurious neatness. The old red brick gleamed of a pleasant colour in the sun, heightened as beauty spots heighten a complexion by the dazzling yellow and brown shadows of the budding vine-leaves that clustered over them. The brass knockers and ornaments of the door shone in the sun like gold. The door-steps and the stones leading up the walk from the door to the garden gate were white as milk, and untarnished by a footstep. The very blackbirds seemed to sing softer in the dean's garden.

To any but the heart of a crabbed and soured verger, hurried from his ale at the Blue Dragon, in Bishop-street, such a calm scene would have brought peace and awoke pleasant memories. But the verger was inexorably hard and soured, so he spent twenty minutes bitterly ruminating over the disgraceful injustice of Providence in teaching a wealthy dean how to make gold, when he (Fulham) had been verger of Salisbury Cathedral eighteen years, man and boy, at a paltry salary of only five-and-twenty shillings per week. Fulham was one of those untoward natures that cannot enjoy even venison at his own table if the man at the next table is taking turtle.

The dean was in London, and in the absence of that dreaded disciplinarian the verger has been more than usually neglectful of the hours of the daily services, and more than usually punctual at the Blue Dragon. No wonder, therefore, that on the present occasion, though it only wanted ten minutes to three, and the bell ought by this time to have begun sounding to call together the scattered choristers from different parts of the town, to warn the precentor from his studies, and to summon the old half-pay captain, the dean's daughter, and the three old maiden sisters who formed the habitual congregation, the unfaithful verger, who knew that no one but the dean cared much for punctuality, stopped at the dean's door, and rang the servants' bell, just to hear from Bessy, his pretty little daughter, when the dean was expected.

A moment after he pulled the shining bell knob, the door opened, and pretty Bessy appeared, nervous, hurried, and alarmed.

"I thought it was you, father," she said, in answer to his question; "but don't stop, for Heaven's sake; we expect master directly. He wrote yesterday to say he should post back, and

be here, if possible, by the afternoon service, and Miss Bertha has been complaining of your never ringing the bell at the proper time. Come to-night; don't stop now, there's a dear father."

The verger turned sulkily away, and scuttled sulkily across the gravel walk leading to the west door. He was just turning the huge key in the lock, when he felt a hand placed on his shoulder. Had it been the guardian genius of the cathedral, or the dean's ghost, or a more terrible and less respectable spirit than either of these, the old verger could not have been more startled when he looked round. A resurrection-man disturbed prizing open a coffin, or a robber of churches detected at the very moment of beating flat a sacramental cup, could scarcely have looked whiter or more alarmed.

Yet it was only a spare tall man, in a mahogany-coloured coat, and an unpowdered scratch wig, a hard, dry-fleshed looking man, with cold keen eyes, heavy grey eyebrows, and a close pinched biting kind of mouth. With his hands behind him, and his severe detective glance fixed on the verger, he looked at that moment for all the world like a lawyer bent on untangling the knots of a puzzling and difficult case. Indeed, but for his rather massive silver shoe-buckles, and a heavy gold ring on one of his fingers, the stranger might have passed for a well-to-do London apothecary travelling on business.

The conversation that followed took almost the shape of a legal examination, and ran thus:

"You are a verger of this cathedral?"

"I am. Yes, sir, I am."

"You have a daughter, maid-servant at the dean's yonder?"

"I have."

"Are you rich?"

"Who can be rich on twenty-five shillings a week, and a sick wife to find for besides?"

"You are therefore, I presume, not unwilling to earn a guinea or two with no great trouble?"

"You need scarcely ask it."

"Does the dean rise early?"

"No, sir, he sits up too late for that; he's down about nine."

"Very well; to-morrow morning, at six o'clock, when your daughter is cleaning the house, induce her to let me in for five minutes. I mean no harm. I am simply a great but unknown admirer of the dean, who would have one look before I leave Salisbury at his celebrated laboratory. For that moment's look I will pay you two guineas."

"I daren't."

"Three."

"I don't think I could."

"Five."

"I will try; be at this west door to-morrow, at six. I can see by your face you're a gentleman. It's nothing to me what you want, so you don't do no harm."

"I will be there," said the stranger; and passing into the cathedral as the door creaked open, took his seat in one of the stalls the most hidden from the dean's seat.

A moment or two more, and the bell, in a

hasty querulous way, began to chide in the white-gowned choristers, who soon appeared simultaneously in different parts of the close, like a scattered flock of pigeons reuniting at feeding-time.

The verger, armed with a badge of power, something resembling an apothecary's pestle, preceded the precentor to his seat, and after that dignitary, who carried his square Oxford trencher-cap in his hand, came the rosy-faced boys two and two, with difficulty restraining their mischief before the dreaded eyes of the organist, who was watching them malignly from the oaken battlements of the organ-loft.

Just as the bell ceased, and the great clock vibrated out the hour, with the tremulous solemnity of pompous age; just as the counter, tenor, and bass, with looks of mutual defiance, had ruffled themselves into their places, the dean entered, and strode to his canopied seat. There was a strange brightness about his eyes, a hot feverish hectic flush upon his cheeks. In his every gesture and look, and even in the tones of his deep voice, there was a perceptible triumph that did not escape his congregation.

"Do you dine with the dean to-morrow?" said the precentor to the eldest canon, as they strolled homewards together. "The dean has had great triumphs in London. His majesty has expressed his approbation of his experiments, and Oxford has granted him special honours."

"It is the most wonderful discovery of the age," replied the canon. "Yes, I'm glad to say I shall meet you to-morrow at our dean's hospitable table."

"Are the great experiments to be made to-morrow?"

"O, of course. Why, I wouldn't miss them for twenty pounds."

"Did he meet with any opposition among London scientific men, do you know?"

"Well, only from one, Mr. Harding, the secretary of the Royal Society, an illiberal-minded man, who insolently and enviously calls our worthy dean a knave, and the spectators of his experiments fools. Ha, ha! How these birds of prey do always collect round great men."

"It is the penalty of success," replied the other, taking a huge pinch of snuff, and leading his friend by the arm, to show him some marvellous engravings by Marc Antonio.

In the great room, with the oriel-window looking out on the lawn, where the cedar-tree stood, was Bertha, holding her father's hand fondly between hers, and kissing him at every sentence, as if to assure herself of his actual bodily presence.

"O, do tell me about the king, dear papa. How was he dressed?—how did he look?—what did he say?—and was the queen there? Tell us all."

"The king, Bertha, wore a dark red coat, embroidered with small gold strawberries, and a deep-flapped white satin waistcoat, trimmed with broad gold lace. He was full of amiable condescension, and asked a great many questions,

half of which, good man, he answered himself, in his usual quick, abrupt, good-humoured way. He examined the gold with great interest, and expressed to me his full approbation."

"Victory! victory! dear papa," said the enthusiastic girl, leaping up and clapping her hands. "Did I not always say that you would be a great man, and triumph over everybody? Shan't I crow over that spiteful Miss Flicker, who used to sneer at you for sitting up half the night over your furnaces, boiling away your money, and your time and health, as she used to say. O, only fancy, making gold!"

"Pray for me, my dear Bertha. Do not forget to pray for me, that I keep humble, lest it be said of me as of Benjamin, that I turned back in the day of battle. I trust no one has been in my laboratory in my absence."

With an air of smiling vigilance Bertha drew the key of the dean's laboratory from her bosom.

At that moment the door opened, and Bessy looked in.

"If you please, sir, there's a gentleman wants to see you."

"Show him in," said the dean.

In a moment Bessy returned and ushered in the stranger, whose interview with the verger we have already reported.

He bowed and took the chair proffered by the dean.

"I am," he said, "a medical man from a distant part of England, attracted here by the fame of your recent chemical discoveries, and more especially by the pamphlet recently published by you on some remarkable experiments on mercury. I agree with you that there is more beyond, and feel with the great Boyle that we scientific men are unwise and hasty in putting limits to the power of nature and art, and in deriding all who believe in uncommon things."

The dean smiled. He was evidently pleased at this harangue, although the oration was uttered in a very set and mechanical way, and the stranger's eyes looked cold and lifeless, as if they were jet beads, and the words came through his small pinched lips one by one as a schoolboy lets out wasps from a phial-bottle.

"You are on the brink of great discoveries," he went on, with the same dry, monotonous voice. "You are a Columbus about to set foot on a vast auriferous continent: the greatest of secrets is, I may say, all but within your reach."

The doctor bowed, smiled, and bent his powdered head deprecatingly. "You rate my discoveries, my dear sir, too highly. I am sorry that my account, and to which I myself insisted on giving merely the humble title of 'Experiments on Mercury,' should have been held out to the world as announcing the actual discovery of the philosopher's stone, which in the usual (mark me)—I say the *usual*—sense of the word, I perhaps, as well as others, think merely chimerical."

The stranger's eyelids compressed till his eyes became almost invisible. A hard smile, such as you see on the mouth of a bronze faun, re-

laxed his face, as he replied, "Exactly; not a word more, my dear sir. We understand each other."

"To-morrow afternoon I exhibit some experiments to our leading people here. Will you dine with me at four o'clock to-morrow, and afterwards witness them?"

"You have anticipated my dearest wish; but I did not dare to intrude such a request."

"A most gentlemanlike man, and of great attainments," said the dean to his daughter, as the stranger bowed himself out.

"Well, I don't like him, papa," said Bertha, making a face of dislike; "his look reminds me of the look a cat gives to a bird it is just going to pounce on."

"Don't be prejudiced, dear. Evidently a keen, clever, hard-headed man, and a great mathematician, I warrant."

As the stranger passed through the gateway of the close, he broke suddenly into a mechanical, hard laugh, and said aloud, "The fox got the cheese by praising the blackbird's voice. Fool and cheat, he has taken me behind the scenes. Let him beware."

That same night, in the deep dark, towards midnight, and all in the cold drifting rain, that hard mysterious man was standing in the close opposite the dean's house, watching the window of the laboratory. There was no moon and no stars, and the wind howled round the corners of the cathedral as if all the dead abbots were hurrying to some ghostly conclave. The only light in the whole four sides of the close came from the dean's window, the blind of which was golden and semi-transparent with the inner lamp-light that shone through it.

Suddenly a dark shadow was visible upon the blind; it held up a crimson bottle to the light. Then the light faded out, and all was dark and still.

The stranger strode away to his inn. Ordering the landlord to call him before five, he bit at a crust and tossed off two glasses of wine. Then, having first made a note in his pocket-book, he threw himself without undressing on the bed, and fell asleep in his grave imperturbable way.

The next morning, just before daybreak, in the cold, comfortless, curdling light, the stranger was at the gate of the dean's house. The verger was on the door-steps talking in a low voice to Bessy, who looked frightened and troubled.

Presently the verger returned to the stranger and said, "Bessy won't do it, sir; she can't do it. The key is in the dean's room, by his bedside. She is afraid you want it for no good."

"Ha!" said the stranger, in his usual quiet bitter way; "the girl's a fool; give her this guinea. Tell her it is mere curiosity; five minutes will do. As for the key, she can go into the room as if to get the dean's clothes to brush. Five guineas for five minutes—not bad pay!"

"And Bessy's guinea included?"

"Not included."

That last guinea turned the scale, still more the assurance that Bessy might be present while

the stranger walked round the laboratory and merely saw and handled the dean's chemical apparatus.

On tiptoe the stranger went, not thievishly or timidly, but still with a cold Satanic malice and heedfulness. Yet all he got for his five guineas, Bessy told her father, was that he felt inside six crucibles, examined six pieces of charcoal that lay on the dean's desk, smelt a bottle containing a red powder, and looked carefully at a pestle and mortar, and a small iron rod that stood near the furnace. All the reply the verger made was, that

"A fool and his money, Bessy, are soon parted."

Five hours later, the close, usually so quiet, was alive with carriages. Two peers, a magistrate, and five clergymen had arrived to witness the experiments. They only now waited for the stranger, who had been so silent and grave at the dinner the day before.

At last there came a knock, and in a moment after he was ushered in by Bessy. He appeared firm, calm, and precise as ever. He shook the dean warmly by the hand, and apologised for being so late. He had had an important letter to despatch by the post.

The dean ushered his guests into his laboratory; the fires burnt clear and bright, the crucibles, the charcoal, all was ready. A shorthand writer was present to note the proceedings. The company having taking their seats with mutual looks of expectation and delight, the dean addressed them. He said that a chance study of the works of Paracelsus had led him to curious chemical experiments; but what he had to show were facts about which he would not theorise. It had been foolishly said that only chemists could judge of such things, but surely the senses of touch and sight were not confined to chemists. To prejudice, avarice, and illiberality no answer would seem satisfactory; but he might ask what trick could prevent mercury boiling at a red heat, or what substance could be found to instantly check it when boiling? How could he introduce gold into a crucible before twelve intelligent and watchful spectators, or what could induce him to seek such modes of acquiring a sinister fame? He was too well aware of the virulence of envy and the strength of prejudice to expect to obtain universal credit; but the curiosity of the public had been so strongly excited, and his character so rigorously examined, that in justice to himself and the approbation of his sovereign (here the dean drew himself erect), he felt proud to make a final series of experiments before spectators of rank and discernment, of liberality, learning, and candour, not from vanity, but from a sincere desire to place his scientific and moral character beyond the limits at least of vulgar curiosity.

The stranger smiled approval, the peers took snuff, and the experiments commenced.

I will recapitulate the chief of them.

The dean first took two ounces of mercury from a cistern full of quicksilver, rubbed it with

ether in a Wedgwood mortar, and then with a grain of a certain white powder. In pouring out the mercury it grew black and clotted. This obtained, the amalgam was subjected to the blowpipe, and left a bead of fine white metal, which remained fixed in a strong red heat. This bead was pure silver. The applause was tremendous.

Five drachms of mercury were then taken and rubbed up with ether and a quarter of a grain of red powder, and the mercury being driven from it by the blowpipe, left a bead of yellow metal, which proved to be pure gold, which resisted aquafortis or the touchstone. A small quantity dissolved in aqua regia produced a purple precipitate in a solution of tin, and in one of green vitriol a brownish precipitate. The cheers were redoubled. The peers grew quite red and fatigued with applauding with two fingers—and standing over the fire.

The final experiment was still more curious, valuable, and convincing. In all these experiments it was delightful to see the deep interest the stranger took in everything, and the calm candour of the dean, and his anxiety that the company should inspect his apparatus.

He now placed half an ounce of mercury in a small Hessian crucible, on a flux of borax, a piece of charcoal, and a piece of nitre. These, being first handed round, were pounded in a mortar, and then pressed down into the crucible, and on this flux was placed half a grain of a certain deep red powder. The crucible was then placed on the fire; but the mercury showed no signs of evaporation or even of boiling. In a small dip taken with a clean iron rod, and in the scoriae, when knocked off, were found whitish globules. After keeping the crucible in a strong red-white heat for twenty minutes, it was carefully taken out and gradually cooled; on breaking it, a globe of yellow metal, weighing nearly three grains, was formed at the bottom. This metal was placed in a sealed phial to be assayed, being evidently, however, in the opinion of all, pure gold.

Every one was in raptures. The peers shook hands with the dean. The clergy chuckled and rubbed their hands. All that Newton and Bacon had done and thought did not approach the material grandeur of the dean's discovery.

"The world," said one enthusiastic canon, "will soon be ringing with your name."

"It will, indeed," said the stranger, in his dry hard way; and turned rather abruptly to beg the dean to give them some statement of his alchemic theories.

The dean at once plunged into all the wildest dreams and rhapsodies of Paracelsus. He explained that the words "mercury" and "sulphur," so common in the writings of that strange fanatic, were merely cyphers to express the hidden qualities of certain bodies. All his discoveries pointed to some universal base, the existence of which his recent experiments went to prove. By the red man and white woman, Paracelsus meant sulphur and mercury; by chasing the red dragon, he meant seeking the philosopher's stone. The white lily and the swan were

only other words for mercury. By the hatching of the basilisk he merely meant the production of a certain subtle poison, known only to alchemists, the very smell of which would destroy life.

"Gracious!" said the brother peers, their gooseberry eyes growing rounder and paler than ever.

The stranger, drier and colder than before, was now taking notes, apparently of the experiments he had seen. When he looked up, it was to ask in what degree of heat the transmutation generally took place.

The dean was apparently rather too elated with his triumph to satisfy the purposeless curiosity of an unknown stranger. He answered rather oracularly and from the clouds, and with a slight tinge of contempt in his manner for less successful seekers of the great secrets of science:

"Your question," he said, "my dear sir, is a wide one. Fire itself is a mystery, and is a mere generic name for a thousand stages of the combustion of the universal sulphur."

It was a familiar feature of the two peers that the more incoherent and mysterious the oracle was, the more they seemed to admire his utterances. So this time, being completely in the dark, they stared, smpered at each other, and repeated the dean's words:

"Universal sulphur!"

"There is the saffron fire, the ashen grey, the crimson, and the azure, each with its own properties, powers, and influences. Now just as the Arabian sun will not ripen the apple, or the Irish sun the palm fruit, so will the azure fire not perform the part of the saffron."

"These are great secrets, indeed," said the stranger, turning his eyes devoutly up to heaven.

"Fire is a living thing with an organisation of its own," continued the dean; "only when you cease to feed it does it die. The fire which I use for transmutation is the lion's rage, the most quenchless of all fires, the white fire, the royal fire that is used at iron foundries."

"The Royal Society should know of these extraordinary discoveries which have at last blessed our age," said the stranger, warming up suddenly to quite an enthusiasm. "That great society watches all sciences and rewards all real discoverers. Its approbation is a European guarantee. Already his majesty has approved and honoured you; you now need only the Royal Society to place its seal on your almost miraculous experiments."

The stranger uttered this glowing exhortation in an elevated yet mechanical voice, but his cold, steely eyes did not warm up or brighten with a smile, and he kept them fixed on the dean's face, which had now assumed its old pale and careworn expression.

"You are very kind," he said, "very kind; but I shall not repeat my experiments before so sceptical and worldly a body of men as the Royal Society. I do not claim any great secret. I merely show men facts; I leave them to draw

their own inferences. A person of my position is surely above suspicion. The intelligence of the present company needs, I think, no further guarantee. Besides, Mr. Harding, the Secretary of the Royal Society, is a personal enemy of mine, ever since I refuted his interpretation of a passage in Boyle. No, I will not expose myself to pain and annoyance from that mischievous man's malice."

The stranger bowed and was silent, but a strange scowl came over his hard features.

The next morning, the dean walked up and down the gravel walk of his garden, his daughter's hand resting fondly on his shoulder. If ever a man was happy, the dean was that bright spring morning. A loving daughter to share his hopes and triumphs; a home beautified by art and luxury. He had wealth, social position; and, to crown all, the fame of an unexpected and almost unprecedented discovery. Can you write a prouder epitaph on any man's grave than this? "He succeeded in all he had ever undertaken."

"How happy I am, dear papa," said Bertha, "to see you at last victorious, after your long hunt for this secret;" and, as she said this, her large brown eyes glowed with pure unselfish love; "you are the great discoverer of the age. They will erect statues to you."

"I am, indeed, happy; God be thanked!" replied the dean, stooping to kiss his daughter's forehead.

The sound of footsteps caused both the dean and Bertha to look round. It was Bessy, rosier than ever with running; her white apron fluttering in the wind, her little feet tripping over the grass. She bore a large official-looking letter in one hand, its broad red seal uppermost.

"What can it be, papa?" said Bertha, her eyes expanding with surprise; "it wants an hour to post time."

"The letter has come, miss," said Bessy, "from that gentleman who was here yesterday. He left it to be brought up here to your papa an hour after the coach started for London."

The dean took it, and nervously broke the seal, as Bessy ran back to the house, gaily as she had come. It ran thus:

"The President of the Royal Society requests the honour of the Dean of Salisbury's presence on Tuesday, the first of April, the next general meeting of the Society, several of the members desiring to witness his remarkable experiments in chemistry both in fixing mercury and producing metals.

"Signed, JOSEPH BANKS, Knt., President,
Somerset House.

"P.S. Mr. James Harding, the Secretary of the Society, is the bearer of this letter."

The letter dropped from the dean's hand, the colour left his face, a cold dew broke out on his forehead, he staggered to a garden-seat, and sat down with his head bent. Bertha was alarmed; she sat down by his side, and seized his hand.

The dean picked up the letter, and showed it to her.

"Are you ill, dear papa?" she said.

"No, darling—it's the letter, the letter," he murmured.

"Why, it's brave, good news, dear papa—more honours for the great genius in chemistry—the great Royal Society want to bestow its honours upon you."

The dean was silent; he sighed, and still kept his head hung down. He looked now more like a convicted criminal than a genius or discoverer whom the world was eager to honour.

Bertha looked at her father for a moment; then, with the quick insight of a woman, she saw that some great blow, whence or how she could not understand, had fallen upon him. She suddenly threw her arms round his neck, and kissed him several times; then she said,

"Oh, dear papa, tell me what has happened. Something dreadful has happened, I know; but you will not keep it from Bertha, who loves you so much."

The dean was silent; he still kept his eyes fixed on the ground. He was crushed to the earth.

"Oh, dear, dear papa, do tell me—you terrify me with this frightful silence. What can there be so terrible in exhibiting those wonderful experiments of yours before the Royal Society? Will they not be wonderstruck like every one else, and acknowledge you the great genius of the age, as every one else does? They must—they shall. Dear, dear papa, do look up and tell me what has happened."

There was a long interval of silence; then the dean gently and fondly removed his daughter's arms from his neck, and looked up. He appeared in that short time to have grown older. His voice was low and tremulous. His eyes seemed to have lost part of their colour, and to have shrunk into their sockets. He pressed his daughter's hands between his own, which trembled as if they were palsied.

"Dear daughter," he said, "what I tell you will give you great pain. It will give me greater pain to tell you. You will have to listen to the story of your father's shame and guilt. I am a self-deceived man, and, what is worse, the deceiver of others. I can no more make gold than the poorest apothecary in the town. I had for years dreamt over books of alchemy, till a wicked longing for power and wealth dominated over my mind. I began to believe in the possibility of making gold, yet never could attain the secret. I still believe in the possibility; but, alas! I am no nearer the secret than I was twenty years ago. I may never discover it—indeed, I fear, greatly fear, I never shall—some one link is wanting, and that one link wanting, all the other links of the great chain are useless. My child, a year ago, as I sat at my furnace, Satan tempted me—a voice seemed to say from the centre of the flame, 'Fool! why try and discover the inscrutable? Pretend to discover it, and you will gain by that pretence the very power you crave.' Bertha, darling, I wickedly and basely

yielded to that voice. I used mercury with gold dust poured into it. I hollowed out holes in the crucibles, hid gold in them, and waxed the surface over—the trick succeeded, the world hailed me as a genius. I had an interview with the king, and my triumph was complete. But the devil, when he promises reward to his slaves, pays them only with phantom and dissolving fame. That cold reserved man who came yesterday has at last fathomed my imposture, and now I am summoned before the Royal Society, not as a discoverer to receive honours, but as a criminal to be tried, found guilty, punished, and disgraced. There is no escape for me. I am a ruined and degraded man; God help me."

Tears sprang to the unhappy man's eyes, and he clasped his daughter in his arms, crying:

"Bertha, Bertha, do not despise and hate your father."

"Father, I pity you, I do not despise you. O who can tell how great and terrible was the temptation! I, too, am a sinner; we are all sinners. Do but repent, dear father, and believe that I love you as much as ever. I know that to such a mind as yours, failure alone is a great punishment. Refuse to accept the decision of these self-elected judges."

"My child, I do repent," said the dean, replying not to Bertha's last advice, but to her first words of consolation. "A cloud has passed from me, I see my sin in all its blackness; but I have to meet these men, and divert the suspicion that this emissary of theirs will arouse, and I dare not face the public shame; no, I dare not be pointed out as a detected trickster." The dean shuddered as he spoke.

"Why not be brave, dear father?" said Bertha; "why not strip yourself of this false distinction! Confess the tempting hopes that led you to anticipate discovery by a false claim. Urge with all your natural eloquence the certainty you still entertain of the discovery, and throw yourself on their mercy to guard your secret."

The dean shuddered again, this time more perceptibly than before. "No, Bertha," he said, speaking between his teeth. "No. I have not the moral courage to bear such a degradation. You do not know the scorn of rivals, the flinty hardness of the angry fanatics of science, vexed at even the hint of discoveries that shall supersede their own. They are cruel and envious, and they call their envy justice. No, my child, I must save myself in another way."

Tuesday, the first day of April, had arrived, and the members of the Royal Society were assembled in the great wainscoted room in Somerset House. The president sat in his emblazoned chair in almost regal dignity. The row of faces around him were the faces of the wisest and most learned men of the day. They looked awful as an immense jury in their close-cropped wigs. One of the members had left his seat, and was talking to the secretary, whose face was radiant with a cold sunshine.

"He will not come," said the member. "It is five minutes past the time; I told you he would not come."

"I tell you he *will* come," said the secretary. At that moment one of the porters came in, and announced the arrival of the Dean of Salisbury.

The secretary hastened to the door to receive the visitor. The dean was in the waiting-room, seated. He rose and started when the secretary entered to ask him into the council-room. One glance at each other's eyes was sufficient to inform the enemies of each other's meaning.

The dean was the first to speak. He owned himself vanquished; he affected no concealment. "Mr. Harding," he said, solemnly, "we have been long rivals, and you have at last triumphed. You see me helpless, disarmed, and at your mercy; use that triumph generously. You have unmasked my supposed discoveries; do not push your victory further."

The dean spoke with flushed face and with a feverish light in his eyes; but Mr. Harding remained icy as before. Nothing could distract him from his position of a scientific constable—a fanatical imperturbable spy and detective.

He merely said, coldly, in the old dry unchangeable voice,

"Mr. Dean, you do yourself a grievous wrong; all the world is talking of you as the greatest discoverer of the age. Our great society is waiting to crown you with honour. Let no false humility render you reluctant to accept these well-earned honours. I go to inform the president of your arrival." There was a smile of triumph in the secretary's eye as he bowed and left the room.

In three minutes he returned.

"Mr. Dean," he said, "the president is ready to receive you."

No one answered. He looked. The dean was not there. He looked again. He then saw in a dark corner of the room a prostrate body. It was the dean's. He felt his heart. He was dead. A smell of bitter almonds rose from the corpse. The dean had swallowed poison.

"I knew the rogue would not face inquiry," was the secretary's only comment.

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